

A Record of a Mortal's Journey to Immortality

(凡人修仙传)

Volume 02

First Steps on the Path of Immortal Cultivation

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(忘语)

Story Description:

A poor and ordinary boy from a village joins a minor sect in Jiang Hu and becomes an Unofficial Disciple by chance. How will Han Li, a commoner by birth, establish a foothold for himself in his sect? With his mediocre aptitude, how will he successfully traverse the path of cultivation and become an immortal? This is a story of an ordinary mortal who, against all odds, clashes with devilish demons and ancient celestials in order to find his own path towards immortality.

Rated 5/5 by translators and ranked 2nd out of the millions of novels on Qidian, “A Record of a Mortal's Journey to Immortality” will draw readers in with an epic tale of honour, betrayal, and love.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 100: Jia Yuan City

“This Lan Province is the eighth largest of the thirteen provinces in the state of Yue. Despite its small size, it is said to be quite wealthy, second only to the Xin Province. It is located in the southern region of the state of Yue. With fertile land, innumerable rivers, lakes, and canals running through the region, as well as its constant favorable weather, the province was extremely suited to growing grain and rice. Thus, it became the state’s largest producer of crops.

Located in the center of Lan Province was Jia Yuan City. Although it wasn’t the Lan Province’s capital, it was, without question, the largest city in the Lan Province. The Great Lu Canal, which spanned from the north to the south of the province, passed through the center of the city. In addition, several roads and waterways also ran through the city. As a result, the city’s transportation was highly developed and could be considered the hub of water transportation, as well as the main road of trade and commerce. Every year, an innumerable amount of merchants and travelers passed through, spurring an enormous amount of trade at this location. Therefore, the fact that Jia Yuan City became the largest city in the province was not strange in the least.

In Jia Yuan City, there was traffic of all sorts. Docks and boatmen were numerous, and could be found anywhere in the city. Boatmen, cart drivers, and unskilled laborers were as many as number of the hairs on an ox. There were several tens of thousands of people, including Sun Ergou, who relied on the harbor to make a living.

(TL: 孙二狗: Sun Ergou. Sun being a surname (not the star in the sky) and Er’gou meaning Second Dog)

Like his name suggested, Sun Ergou had long, slanted eyebrows and crooked eyes. In addition, he had the appearance of a ruffian, a cross between a rotten pear and a spoiled jujube. However, because he was skilled in flattery and reading body language, he had actually been able to secure the position of minor gang leader. Managing several tens of unskilled porters, he made a living off the harbor transporting the goods

and luggage of passing merchants.

This was the reason why Sun Ergou's many subordinates had hastily gathered at early dawn and respectfully addressed him with "Good morning Grandpa Er!" and "Grandpa Er has come!"

(TL: In Confucianism, status is often associated with age. That is why you often see in Chinese stories, "I, your father." or "This grandpa [referring to self]", as a way of acting arrogant.)

.....

Hearing these greetings, Sun Ergou could not help but be somewhat smug. After all, being addressed as "Grandpa" indicated that here, he was someone of status. Consequently, he exhibited an air of arrogance. He finally responded to his subordinates' greetings after snorting from his nose, "Who is Grandpa Er? Shouldn't it be Grandpa Ergou?"

"It should, but here, there's only a two-legged dog imitating a man!"

(TL: A play on words from his name. 二狗 Ergou, Er 二 Two, Gou 狗 Dog.)

"Haha! Haha! ..."

.....

The burst of mocking and ridicule could not mask the words that entered Ergou's ear.

After Sun Ergou had heard this, his face suddenly sunk, and his mood dropped in an instant.

He slowly turned his head and looked to the several tens of people at the other side of the dock. He brought his gaze down to a large, burly, dark-skinned man as a hint of hate flashed in his eyes.

Among all the people that Sun Ergou hated the most in the entire city of Jia Yuan, this large, dark-skinned man would absolutely make it into his top three. If someone were to tell him that he or she would use the wealth of Sun Ergou's entire family to thoroughly make this large, dark-skinned man disappear from the world, Sun Ergou might hesitate, but if he or she

changed it to only half of Sun Ergou's wealth, he wouldn't hesitate to agree in the least. Naturally, this was because he led a life of decadence; the so-called entirety of his family's wealth wasn't much to begin with.

No one had known what the dark-skinned man's name was for quite a long time. The people at the harbor either addressed him as "Grandpa Black", or his nickname, "Black Bear". He was the leader of the small gang "Iron Fist Group" while Sun Ergou held a similar status in the "Fourth Level Gang". As a result, these factions had arrived at this dock to supervise the porters of their respective sides.

A mountain cannot hold two tigers, let alone this minuscule dock. As a result, the two gangs have had tense relations since. After several conflicts over merchant customers, their relationships grew even more vile. Whenever the two gangs saw each other, they would sneer in contempt and shove each other aside, falling short of a full-on conflict.

If the subordinates acted in this manner, then what was there to say about the greatest beneficiaries of the business here, Sun Ergou and Black Bear? These two figures looked at each other with great dislike. However, as the young gang leaders, these two knew that the Iron Fist Group and the Fourth Level Gang were allied gangs. They had united to fend off the comparatively larger "Poison Dragon Gang". As a result, although the two had wanted to drive the other away from this place and monopolize the dock, they could only restrain themselves for the time being. However, they accumulated resentment and fury against one another and vented their feelings through their subordinates' verbal conflicts. Their exchange of insults had become a common occurrence that took place every morning.

As a matter of fact, Sun Ergou's subordinates did not even wait to initiate a conflict. Many clever, eloquent subordinates struck back without a trace of politeness.

"Do you know what animal is the most stupid of them all?"

"Bears!"

"Which of bears are the most stupid?"

“Black bears without a doubt!”

“Ha...”

When Black Bear had originally heard his own subordinates ridicule the other party, his face wore a proud expression. However, his elated face darkened after hearing these words. Sun Ergou started to smile. Pleased, he patted the shoulders of several subordinates to further encourage them.

Black Bear’s subordinates were not to be outdone. Those on Sun Ergou’s side were not polite either. A great deal of filthy words spurted out from both sides. Everyone became each other’s old grandpa, and neither side feared the other. Naturally, the conflict at the dock was not pleasant to hear. Vulgar unpleasantries of all kinds were exchanged.

As the leaders of their respective gangs, Sun Ergou and Black Bear coolly looked at each other. Since they were people with status, they naturally could not join in the abusive, quarrelsome racket.

Just as these two sides’ mouths and tongues were about to dry, saliva suddenly splattered. One of Sun Ergou’s subordinates cried out in alarm, “A boat is drawing near!”

These words roused Black Bear’s near one hundred cursing subordinates, who all exhaled in surprise. They all stopped making noise and immediately turned their gazes toward the river bank. After all, shining white silver was far more attractive than the fleeting verbal delight.

However, when Black Bear’s group looked toward the boat in the dock, they were somewhat disappointed. It was only a small flat boat. At best, it would only have three to five merchant customers, which was not a large amount of business at all.

This was not surprising, given that this dock was rotten and small. In addition, its location was far from the city. Under these circumstances, it was only natural that no big boats would come here. However, during peak season for trade and commerce, other docks would have no space for large boats, so merchants would have no choice but to disembark here.

After this small boat stopped at the dock, two people climbed off board. One appeared to be a common youngster about seventeen to eighteen years old. The other was a large man at least two heads taller than an ordinary person.

The youngster wore a common azure garment, and a small yellow bird perched on his shoulder. Just as he stepped off board, he looked around. He had the appearance of a rural villager that had entered the city for the first time. The huge man wore a green gown and a mantle over his head. His facial appearances were unclear because he wore his clothes in a strange manner. The huge man followed close behind the youngster, refusing to fall even a step behind. Based on his appearance, it seemed that he was a servant.

The huge man and the youngster were actually Han Li and Crooked Soul; they had traveled on the road for three consecutive months before arriving at Doctor Mo's homeland.

Chapter 101: Troubles Brought Upon by Riches

Han Li had traveled in a southeastern direction from his hometown and rushed straight towards the Lan Province.

On the way, he had met with other travelers, but when they arrived at the bustling city streets, Han Li had left their company to take a shortcut on a path that ran through the desolate wilderness. He didn't face much danger even halfway through the journey. In fact, the only slightly dangerous incident he had encountered was when he had met several hungry wild wolves during his stay at some remote region in the vast wilderness. Although the wolves were the ones hunting Han Li, they ended up as Han Li's dinner instead.

Han Li had traveled through two other provinces before finally arriving at Lan Province with a body covered in dust.

The moment he entered the Lan Province, he was amazed by the massive water channels he saw, sprawling from one end to the other and accessible from all directions. After all, he came from a region where there was mostly just mountainous wilderness. There weren't many places to see small lakes, not to mention big lakes and canals. As for drinking water, they would usually obtain it from wells or small creeks.

Thus, Han Li was extremely interested in the boats and crafts that were sailing on the water canals. In the end, because of his curiosity and obsession, he had spent some money and rented a small boat, savoring the taste of his virgin sailing experience.

After ten days of pleasant sailing, Han Li had arrived at Jia Yuan City, which was mentioned in Doctor Mo's will, and sailed into an unremarkable dock.

The first impression the dock gave Han Li was that it was far too decrepit.

The dock was constructed entirely from simple wooden panels. Not only

was the place narrow and crude, but rotten baskets and broken bags were also strewn about, making the dock incomparably dirty. Standing on the two bamboo piers at the sides of the dock were several tens of barechested men who wore only short pants and emitted a strong odor from their sturdy builds.

Currently, all these sturdy males were staring unblinkingly at him and Crooked Soul. Not only that, but there were also some who even revealed a fervent look in their eyes. Han Li was surprised for a moment, but he immediately smiled faintly.

Before disembarking from his small boat and descending onto the dock, the boatman had warmly reminded him that inside Jia Yuan City, the pier had an unwritten rule: no matter the amount of cargo that a passenger brought, he had to hire a porter from the pier to help him. If not, the passenger would face negative, unkind treatment from the harbor gangs and might even get beaten up.

Since this was Han Li's first time here, he had no intentions to disrupt the social customs, so he honestly asked, "I need to hire a porter. Is there anyone available?"

Sun Ergou retracted his sight. From his previous inspection, he could already tell that the youth who had just left the boat was a young master from some rich clan. Not only that, but also the giant man was most likely his bodyguard. This type of pair was frequently seen throughout the year whenever young masters from wealthy clans came to visit Jia Yuan city. These young masters were often here to expand their horizons and spend their money before going back to boast. Thus, there wasn't much to be bothered about them.

But these types of people, who loved to slap themselves until they were swollen in order to look imposing, made for perfect targets! As long as he used sweet words to flatter them, these country bumpkins would scatter their money about freely. As a result, they were a good source of business to the shopkeepers here.

However, it wasn't the Fourth Level Gang's turn this time around.

According to his prior agreement with Black Bear, the two gangs would take turns doing business with the unsuspecting tourists, and stealing customers would not be tolerated. As for the amount of money to be made, it depended on their luck. The day before, they had made a deal ensuring that today was the Black Bear Gang's turn.

Thinking of this, Sun Ergou glanced over to the side, only to see Black Bear's men discussing in a low voice. Shortly after, a man ran excitedly towards the direction of the youth.

"Out of the question. It's impossible for you to carry my belongings alone. Call another person over." Han Li commanded as he looked at this robust man, glanced at the large amount of baggage on Crooked Soul's back, and lightly shook his head.

"Young master, I'm strong enough to carry such a small luggage with just one hand. There's no need to look for others." The muscular man wasn't willing to split his earnings with the other porters. Not only that, he was sure that there was no way he wouldn't be able to carry the baggage unless it was filled with stones.

After he finished speaking, the muscular man walked in front of Crooked Soul, with the intent to snatch the luggage away.

Han Li sighed. Inside the luggage, there was about two thousand taels of silver, as well as an assortment of other random items. The total weight, which was not light at all, was impossible for ordinary humans to carry.

But seeing how passionate the muscular man was, Han Li could only helplessly signal Crooked Soul to hand the baggage over to the muscular man before he tried to snatch it.

As expected, once the baggage was in the muscular man's hands, his countenance underwent a drastic change. He expended his energy but could only walk a few steps before running out of breath. Embarrassed, the man had to put down the baggage and eventually called one more person for help.

Han Li finally nodded his head in satisfaction upon seeing that the two

of them were able to carry the baggage. He quickly left the harbor, walking on the path that led to the city,

It wasn't that Han Li lacked knowledge about how the world functioned. Although his experience in Jiang Hu was limited, he could sense the pair staring at him through eyes filled with greed. Little did they know that they were about to invite trouble of a magnitude that they would not be able to handle.

Seeing the youth's back moving further and further away, Sun Ergou retracted his covetous gaze. He suppressed the joy within his heart and locked his eyes with the eyes of Black Bear, who was on the opposite site of the dock. Both of them knew that within the baggage, there was most likely an immense wealth.

As expected, Black Bear was also filled with joy. He slightly hesitated before flashing a look over to Sun Ergou, who intuitively walked towards a nearby rubbish dump. Before this huge source of wealth, even if Black Bear was the one who killed Sun Ergou's father and stole his wife, he would also be willing to put aside all grievances and work together. After all, 'Humans die for wealth, while birds die for food'.

(TL: “人为财死, 鸟为食亡” (idiom): man will do anything in his power to become rich)

“50-50!” Sun Ergou said in a low voice.

“30-70! This was originally our prey.” Black Bear directly refuted.

“40-60, and I can't lower it any further. Your explanation is not enough to make me concede.” Sun Ergou stated in a sly manner, hitting the nail on the head.

“This.....” Black Bear hesitated. Naturally, he wanted to maximize his own profits.

“Hmph! You can take your time to think all you want, but I'm afraid that people from the other gangs already have their eyes on this fat sheep.” Sun Ergou coldly snorted.

“Alright, we'll do it your way. Let's strike our palms to seal the deal.”

Black Bear was obviously agitated by Sun Ergou's words, but he quickly agreed to the offer.

"Pa" "Pa" "Pa" Sun Ergou and Black Bear spat on their palms and struck each other's palms three times, forming a temporary alliance.

"Okay, quick, we need to catch up to him before he disappears into the crowded areas." Sun Ergou hurriedly exclaimed.

"Hehe! Don't you worry, I've already instructed the two whom he hired as porters to lead him into a backwater alley. Let's hurry over there now to intercept them." Considering himself quite crafty, Black Bear laughed.

"Excellent! What a cunning plan, my old brother!" Sun Ergou's expression broke into joy, but inside, his heart shuddered. He silently reminded himself to increase his guard when dealing with Black Bear.

Chapter 102: Murder on Arrival

Walking away from the dock, Han Li had his two porters walk in front of him and lead him to a nearby inn. He planned to first have a proper rest and then think of his other affairs.

These two men didn't hesitate to lead Han Li into the city. On the way, they turned seven corners and changed directions eight times. After they walked for a good while, he hadn't seen the slightest trace of an inn.

Although Han Li continued to follow behind the two porters, he saw that with each passing road intersection, his surroundings became increasingly desolate. He wrinkled his brow.

Although he hadn't lodged within a large city before, he still knew that it was impossible for an inn to be established in such a secluded place. What customers would possibly arrive here?

Thus, when they brought him into a filthy, dark alley, Han Li bitterly smiled. He felt that he should immediately restrain the two and torture them into telling him what they sort of scheme they were planning.

Just as Han Li had thought to act, ten large men suddenly appeared further up ahead in the alley. These men seemed somewhat familiar. Indeed, he had seen them earlier, at the docks.

These men held a variety of iron clubs and daggers. At this moment, they gazed at Han Li and Crooked Soul with malicious intent. In addition, those two porters who were carrying Han Li's luggage suddenly charged into the crowd and turned their heads, giving Han Li a sinister smile.

Han Li sighed. It seemed he no longer needed to interrogate them because he realized their plan. He didn't expect that, as soon as he stepped foot on Doctor Mo's hometown, he would come across a cheap plot to kill him for his money.

"Boy, don't blame our cruel hearts. You should blame whoever let you bring this much silver for your bad luck!" A coarse voice spoke from behind him.

Han Li turned to look, finding seven to eight robust men appear behind him. They were led by two men: one of them was tall and burly, and had black skin, while the other had a crooked head and rat eyes. They were Black Bear and Sun Ergou.

This was not the first time these two had done this kind of shady business, plotting to kill and steal. They clearly understood that, so long as the job was done cleanly and no witnesses remained, the authorities would not take notice of it. After all, even if someone were to report a missing foreigner, the amount of people that went missing each year was far too great. It was impossible to expend the great amount of effort to look for them one after another.

That was why, after Black Bear had finished talking, he did not hesitate to signal several men to charge. Those men brandished their deadly weapons and quickly surrounded Han Li and Crooked Soul.

Seeing these large men's bloodthirsty, cruel appearances, Han Li could not help but feel a desire to kill flash through his eyes. He knew that these men had done such deplorable acts on more than one occasion; otherwise, they wouldn't reek so strongly of blood.

"Kill them all! Do not hold back!" Han Li coldly commanded Crooked Soul.

Upon hearing Han Li, Crooked Soul let out several soft roars, each roar carrying a trace of excitement. It suddenly charged out, rushing directly into the crowd.

"Hu!" The giant let out a punch as fast as lightning, hitting a large man's head. That robust man became like a bag of sand, flying crookedly into a stone wall. His blood and brains streamed all over the ground; only half of his head remained.

At this time, one man wielding a dagger and another with a crude iron club took this opportunity to attack Crooked Soul's back.

Crooked Soul didn't turn its head. Instead it waved its arm behind its neck, slashing around in a semi circle. "Peng, peng!" The pair's weapons flew into the air, along with the hands grasping them. Fresh blood

dripped down between their thumbs and forefingers.

Crooked Soul immediately stood on a single leg and swept the other leg behind him like a sickle as fast as the wind. The two assailants were immediately kicked in the abdomen and flew more than a zhang away. They fell onto the ground, motionless.

When the others saw these events, they sucked in a breath of cold air. A look of fear flashed in the faces of the men surrounding them. They became somewhat hesitant to attack.

Even though they had stopped their hands, Crooked Soul shot its arms out without restraint, smashing the skulls of the two men who were at his side. Without Han Li's command, it would not stop its hand of its own accord.

Sun Ergou and Black Bear's complexions were very unsightly. It was very clear that this large figure that they had mistaken as an ordinary bodyguard was actually a peerless expert.

"Kill this man! Each person who participates will be rewarded twenty taels of silver!" Sun Ergou had an unclear premonition in his mind and hastily sent out the several 'experts' at his side by issuing a great reward.

As soon as the men beside Black Bear and Sun Ergou heard this, their faces showed an expression of joy. These shallow martial artists only knew some basic boxing skills and naturally couldn't tell that, against Crooked Soul, the difference in their strengths was like the distance between Heaven and Earth. They had merely believed that their opponent was simply a little stronger than them and slightly more skilled. Thus, they possessed no fear at all. Now, galvanized by the temptation of a great reward, they charged towards Crooked Soul one after another.

After Black Bear heard Sun Ergou's words, his face twitched, but his face soon became calm. Without saying a single word, his gaze simply drifted erratically to and from Han Li.

Currently, Black Bear was constantly complaining to himself.

He and Sun Ergou were different. He was able to climb to his current

position because he could rely on his strength in an exchange with real weapons. This was why, in addition to having an adequate physique and exceptional eyesight, he could enter the ranks of third rank martial artists.

As a result, when he saw Crooked Soul fight, his heart jumped like a spear. When his heart finally fell to the ground, he could see that Crooked Soul's skill was great profound. Even if the two gang leaders were to join the fray, their odds of success would not necessarily be high, let alone with their weak subordinates, who were like kittens and puppies. However, he didn't dare to flee because this large man had clearly not exerted his full strength. If Crooked Soul were to see him attempting to escape, Black Bear feared that he would die a faster death.

In order to live, it seemed that he could only attack that rustic youngster, whose status was far greater than the large man's. Only by threatening this man with a hostage could Black Bear possibly escape from death. As for the silver, he wouldn't dare ask for it. With such a ferocious bodyguard, perhaps he was the young master of some wealthy provincial lord. He was clearly the son of some influential family and was disguising himself for a stroll. Today, Black Bear could escape death. Even if he had the blessing and protection of the Gods, taking the heavy bundle was naturally an entirely different matter!

Black Bear thought of this and decided to take advantage of his subordinates' charge. After he signaled Sun Ergou with his eyes, he stealthily approached the stage.

Chapter 103: Subdue

Han Li had his back facing Black Bear, who was standing alongside the battling crowd. Although Black Bear tried his best to soften his footsteps, how could it possibly escape Han Li's notice?

As the distance between Black Bear and Han Li shortened to just a few steps, Black Bear started to sprint, moving frenziedly like a demon. Han Li lightly shifted his body slightly and pivoted to directly face Black Bear, revealing a smile on his face.

Black Bear was shocked out of his wits, but he could no longer stop his momentum. Helplessly, he could only roar as he extended his black hairy hands, grabbing ruthlessly towards Han Li. He estimated that Han Li was just someone without much battle experience, and should have been shocked immobile by his savage, demon-like rush, thus rendering him vulnerable

Upon seeing the black, burly man recklessly raise his hand against him, Han Li's expression suddenly sunk. His body flickered and disappeared right in front of Black Bear's eyes.

Black Bear's roar became stuck in his throat as he quickly halted his steps, planning to run away. Suddenly, he felt the point of a sword that shone brilliantly like snow coming into contact with his throat before it disappeared once more. Black Bear rapidly covered the bleeding wound with his hands and attempted to speak. However, only some unintelligible grunts were heard before his corpse fell onto the ground.

The color of Sun Ergou's face turned waxy yellow. He had witnessed the youth moving like a specter as he appeared behind Black Bear's back and easily sliced Black Bear's throat with a flexible sword he had drawn from his waist. Afterward, the youth took out a white cloth and wiped the blood off his sword.

The young man raised his head and flashed a smile at Sun Ergou, almost as if he could sense Sun Ergou's gaze.

As if he had seen a poisonous snake, Sun Ergou quickly retracted his

gaze. His long-time enemy, Black Bear, had just died, but he felt not a hint of joy or excitement. On the contrary, he felt sad and mournful, like a person in distress.

He was completely awake now, and he knew full well that this young man was no fat sheep, but rather a King Yan from Hell who wanted his life.

(TL: King Yan: the god of death and a ruler of one of Hell's eighteen levels)

The only slight trace of hope that Sun Ergou had left was whether his subordinates were able to defeat Han Li's giant bodyguard. If that were the case, then he would still have a chance at surviving, enabling him to negotiate with the young man and thus saving his insignificant little life.

But as soon as Sun Ergou saw the situation unfolding over there with the young man's giant bodyguard, he became dumbstruck like a wooden chicken.

Lacking the strength to move even a single muscle, over twenty burly men were lying on the ground, bleeding profusely. The giant bodyguard glanced coldly in Sun Ergou's direction.

Although a mantle was obscuring the giant's features, Sun Ergou could still feel a bestial, bloody aura emanating from the large figure, causing his waxy yellow face to turn pale white.

Han Li observed the variation of expressions on Sun Ergou's face, and from his movements, Han Li determined that this person did not know martial arts. Looking at Sun Ergou's face of abject terror, Han Li disdained from dealing with Sun Ergou personally.

"Crooked Soul, kill him!" Han Li commanded.

"No! Please! I surrender, I'm willing to give up all my fortune to young master. I'm willing to work like a slave, and I know all the news floating around Jia Yuan City! I could be a good lapdog for young master..." Sun Ergou walked over, step by step, towards the large man, whom he viewed as a demon. Begging for mercy in a panic, he frightenedly limped across

the ground.

“Ai!” Han Li originally wanted to ignore Sun Ergou’s words, but as soon as he heard that Sun Ergou knew all the news regarding Jia Yuan City, his heart was moved, he became filled with joy.

“Stay your hand for now.” He commanded to Crooked Soul, who was about to twist Sun Ergou’s neck. Han Li walked forward, stopping right in front of Sun Ergou.

“Are you very familiar with Jia Yuan City?” Han Li smiled as he asked, taking on the very appearance of kindness.

Just earlier, Sun Ergou had seen Han Li’s ruthless side, so how would he dare to be slow to reply? Immediately, his voice quavered as he shouted, “Very familiar, extremely familiar. I grew up here so I know everything that happens here as if it were on the back of my hand.”

Now it was as if he had grabbed onto a life-saving strand of grass; he couldn’t help but wish he could make himself sound more useful by a tenfold so that Han Li would feel that he was still of use.

Hearing Sun Ergou’s reply, Han Li touched his own nose in consideration before pulling a bottle out from his robes.

He took out a white, longan-sized medicine from the bottle and handed it to Sun Ergou.

(TL: a longan is a fruit belonging to the same family as the lychee)

“Either you consume this or you die.” Han Li told him in straightforward manner.

The hand that Sun Ergou extended to take the medicine trembled violently. He hesitated while looking at the white pill in his hands before shifting his eyes to meet Han Li’s cold gaze. Coughing a few times, he had no choice but to ingest the pill.

“Good, I can trust you now.” Satisfied, Han Li nodded his head.

“The name of this pill is Rotten Heart Pill, and it was personally concocted by me. Every month, you need to consume the antidote, or else

your inner organs will rot, causing you to die. I believe that you are an intelligent man, and you will serve me to the best of your abilities.” Han Li coldly and threateningly stated.

Sun Ergou was already prepared in his heart, but upon hearing the effects of the pill he had just consumed, he couldn't help but to wail pitifully, appearing extremely depressed.

“Relax. As long as you help me settle what I need to do in the Jia Yuan City, I will neutralize the poison and return your freedom back to you. Based on your martial skills, I can't really put you to good use anywhere else.” Han Li used both the stick and carrot, giving Sun Ergou the assurance that as long as he completed his task well, there was still some hope that he would be freed.

“Truly, young master?!” Sun Ergou's expression slightly trembled upon hearing this news.

“Take these taels of silver with you and clean up this place. I don't wish for this matter to spread, do you understand?” Han Li commanded as he tossed a bag of silver over to him.

After catching the bag, Sun Ergou weighed it in his hand. It was heavy, as if there were about 200 taels of silver inside.

An expression of joy appeared on his face. He realised that if he could work for such a man with riches and authority, it might not necessarily be a bad thing.

“Young master, please leave this to me. I will handle this well, without creating any trouble for you!” He laughed as he patted his chest proudly.

“Okay, I shall leave first to find an inn. Tomorrow morning, come look for me. Since you yourself claim to be the local head in Jia Yuan City, you should be able to find out which inn I will stay in.” Han Li commanded again, without a trace of politeness in his voice.

“Yes! Yes! Tomorrow morning, I will be there, waiting for young master's commands!” At this stage, Sun Ergou could only be described as “eager” to become Han Li's lackey.

Han Li smiled as he gestured to Crooked Soul, who picked up the baggage, and left the alley. After walking a distance, Han Li turned back and glanced at Sun Ergou, only to find him obediently standing there at the same spot. Sun Ergou was using his eyes to respectfully send Han Li off, showing an expression of fear and loyalty.

“Interesting!” Han Li suddenly felt that this person was extremely interesting and intelligent. Perhaps he could really put him to good use in a sticky situation.

Chapter 104: Information

“The gang I founded, the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association, possesses 64,000 common gang members. Core gang members include more than seven thousand people. It is also one of the three great overlords of the Lan Province. Its main branch is set up in Jia Yuan City, and its side branches are....

“Throughout my life, I married five women and witnessed the birth of two daughters. My apprentices....”

“First Wife Jin, she had a gentle disposition. She was the sole daughter of the Golden Lion Escort Company’s Head Escort Chief, Jin Can. She has already passed away, leaving behind her daughter, Mo Yuzhu.

(TL: When talking about his wives, Doctor Mo is listing the order in which he married them and their maiden clan name.)

“Second Wife Li was educated and well-balanced. She was the daughter of some rich household. Unfortunately, she did not have any children.

“Third Wife Liu has a bold disposition, but she is rather ambitious. She is the younger sister of Quling City’s Lord and Wind Sect’s Sect Leader, Liu Feng. She bore no children. Pay great attention to her.

(TL: “Quling” means “crooked tomb”)

“Fourth Wife Yan is my younger female cousin from my mother’s side. She has a calm disposition, excels in scheming, and has great ingenuity. She raised one daughter, Mo Caihuan. Before I departed, I bestowed most of my authority over Fearsome Flood Dragon Association to her. You can trust her.

“Fifth Wife Wang is taciturn. She was infatuated with me and was previously First Wife Jin’s personal maid. She did not bear children, and she secretly grasped hidden strength. You can trust her unconditionally.

“Adopted Daughter Mo Feng Wu is the daughter of my confidant and subordinate. After her parents died, I received her as an adopted daughter. Before I left, she had just turned seven and was exceptionally

intelligent.

“Yan Ge, Eldest Disciple. His aptitude is common. I have already passed on the cultivation methods for Demonic Silver Hand over to him. Before I left, he was twelve years old. His temperament is average.

“Zhao Kun, Second Disciple. I already passed on the Sleeping Dragon Arts to him. Before my departure, he was ten years old. His temperament is indiscernible.

“Ma Kongtian, my sworn little brother. He serves as a protector for the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association. His temperament...

.....

Han Li held in his hand a paper filled with handwriting: Doctor Mo's will. Currently, he was inside Hui Yuan Inn's top room, walking to and fro repeatedly as he remained lost in thought.

The will was written attentively. Not only did it clearly explain the powerhouse that Doctor Mo had established, the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association, but it also crudely described the temperament of his wives thoroughly. This caused Han Li's heart to sink slightly.

What was mentioned in his will were matters from ten years ago. The present state of affairs were sure to have had undergone an absolutely earth-shaking change.

How should this be done? Should he contact Doctor Mo's wives or steal the Yang Jaded Treasure and escape without a trace? These decisions required Han Li to fully understand the current state of affairs.

Thus, the local thug he subdued yesterday, Sun Ergou, was of great use to him. Han Li could probably acquire a lot of useful information from him.

After Han Li carefully read through the will, he put it away into his bosom. Then, lost in thought, he raised his head, walked to the bed, and sat down.

He spread his legs and raised his palms to the sky before setting them

on his knees. Afterwards, he shut his eyes and began to inspect his body's condition.

The thread of cold yin poison inside his dantian had started spreading outward a month ago. It was originally just a trace of an indistinct shadow, but it had currently condensed into a black pea-sized sphere. In addition, it slowly beginning to grow in size.

(TL: Dantian generally references to a place below your navel where essence and Qi gathers.)

According to Han Li's estimates, he would have two months at most before this yin poison thoroughly broke out. When that time came, he feared that he would truly be hard-pressed to escape death.

Just as Han Li was worried sick as he secretly resolved himself to acquire the "Warm Yang Precious Jade", someone knocked on his door.

"Come in!" Han Li coldly said, as he opened his eyes.

The room door softly opened, and Sun Ergou walked in with his head lowered. As soon as he saw Han Li, he acted with the greatest of courtesy, declaring respectfully, "Greetings, Young Master! Sun Ergou has come to hear Young Master's assignments!"

"Not bad, you found me quite quickly. You truly do have some skill!" Han Li said in satisfaction. He then stood up from the bed, and then, with his hands behind his back, he walked in front of Sun Ergou.

"I am indebted by Young Master's praise. If I could not perform such a small, trivial task, then for what reason would Young Master have spared my humble life?" Sun Ergou's happy face showed a great loyalty.

When Sun Ergou had returned that day, it wasn't as if he hadn't thought of informing his superiors of the matter regarding Han Li and have experts come to take revenge. But when he thought of the "Rotten Heart Pill" that he had consumed, his courage thoroughly disappeared.

After a night of great consideration, he couldn't think of any other options and was left with no choice but to obediently pay Han Li a visit. He only wished that when he provided his assistance in the future, he

would be given the antidote to this frightening “Rotten Heart Pill”.

“First tell me your status! From your appearance that day, it would seem that you’re a small chief.” Han Li indifferently said.

“I am a dock overseer for the Western City district’s Fourth Level Gang. I have about 450 subordinates, and could be considered a minor gang leader.” Sun Ergou replied respectfully.

“Fourth Level Gang?” Han Li dully asked.

“That’s right. Fourth Level Gang is one of the 33 small gangs in the western part of Jia Yuan City. It has about a thousand gang members, but most of them are dock coolies. The gang head is the ape, Shen Zhong Shan. He has three great protectors as subordinates.” Sun Ergou immediately gave the complete details discreetly. Although he had revealed information about his gang to an outsider, his face didn’t have the slightest amount of shame.

(TL: coolie: an unskilled native laborer.)

“That large dark skinned man I took care of yesterday, was he also part of the Fourth Level Gang?”

“He was not. That person was called Black Bear, and he was a gang leader of the Iron Fist Group, another one of the 33 gangs. We were not on good terms with one another.” Sun Ergou replied with a flattering smile.

“Even though this is just the western part of the city, there are already so many small gangs. Thus, in the entire Jia Yuan City, the total number must be quite large, right?” With his hands behind his back, Han Li unhurriedly returned to the front of the bed.

“Of course. In the entire Jia Yun City, there are more than forty small gangs with a thousand members or less. There are seven to eight medium-sized gangs with three to four thousand members. With regards to the large gangs that have over ten thousand members, there are only three.” Sun Ergou stood there, speaking with absolute honesty.

“Tell me about the state of affairs in the both the large and medium-

sized gangs. You don't need to tell me about the small gangs!" Han Li pulled up his sleeves and sat down on the bed. Afterwards, the calm Sun Ergou started talking.

Chapter 105: Shocking News

“The three largest gangs in Jia Yuan City are the Brothers’ Union, the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association, and the Heavenly Tyrant Sect. The smaller gangs are the Iron Spear Association, the Sworn Brotherhood, the Azure Clothed Gang, the Spring Rain Building, the Gold Sword Sect, the Dark Riverboat Gang, the Diamond Sect, the Setting Sun School, and several other sects.”

Sun Ergou named all these gangs in one breath. Panting, he continued, “The strongest of the three large factions is the Heavenly Tyrant Sect. It is allied with the Gold Sword Sect and Azure Clothed Gang, and they occupy the Eastern City district, which is the most prosperous district. The Brothers’ Union, which is slightly weaker, is allied with the Iron Spear Association, the Dark Riverboat Gang, and the Sworn Brotherhood, occupies the Northern City district. The weakest, the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association, rules the over Southern City district, alongside the Spring Rain Building, the Diamond Sect, and the Setting Sun School. Lastly, the chaotic Western City district is divided amongst numerous smaller gangs. Although these small gangs are constantly involved in power struggles, if a larger power wanted to invade the Western City district, then the smaller gangs would cease fighting and face the external attackers. Thus, the entire Jia Yuan City could be considered a four-sided confrontation.” Sun Ergou’s words came out like a torrent from his mouth, never ending. Without even pausing to think, he had explained the general state of affairs of every power within the city.

After Han Li heard the explanation, he muttered to himself for a moment before thoughtfully asking, “I’ve heard people say that the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association was one of the Lan Province’s three overlords, and that Jia Yuan City was where it originally established its headquarters. How did it become the weakest of the three large gangs of the city?”

“Young master, what you said is ancient history. Many years ago, the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association was truly ferocious, and its power

nearly encompassed the entire Lan Province. As a superpower during that time, the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association had its headquarters located in Jia Yuan City. It was originally intolerant of other gangs stepping in, and as a result, the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association controlled the entire city by itself. Back then, the other gangs didn't even dare to show their shadow under the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association's intimidation. However, for an unknown reason, the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association suddenly decayed in power overnight. Not only did it lose some of its territories, the power of its headquarters in Jia Yuan City greatly waned in power. Thus, gangs of all sizes took advantage of this opportunity and emerged from hiding. After several bloody battles, the situation we have today took shape." Sun Ergou explained this while remaining extremely politely.

"Do you know why the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association suddenly weakened?" Han Li slowly asked Sun Ergou, furrowing his eyebrows.

"This..... to tell you the truth, this humble person's status in his gang isn't very high. I truly do not know much about this, and the few things that I do know were told to me by other people. It seemed that the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association had an internal conflict that led to a civil war. Its decline can also be attributed to other large powers, that suppressed them from behind." Slightly embarrassed at himself for not knowing enough information, Sun Ergou gave Han Li a vague answer.

"Oh, so it was like that!" Han Li slightly smiled. It seemed he had guessed this was the situation earlier.

"Who is currently in charge of the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association? You should at least know who." Han Li asked.

"I do know who. The person in charge of the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association is Madam Yan, the widow of the former Fearsome Flood Dragon Association's leader, Mo Juren." Sun Ergou hastily replied.

"Widow?" Han Li was astonished.

"That's right! The original founder of the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association, Master Mo, died. Does his wife not become a widow?" Sun

Ergou blinked and grew somewhat hesitant. He did not know if he said something wrong.

“Who said that the association’s Master Mo died?” As his complexion turned colder, Han Li sensed that something was out of place.

“Everyone in Jia Yuan City knows about this. A year ago, Ghost Hand Mo Juren’s last disciple revealed that he had obtained Association Master Mo’s will and keepsakes. With these in his possession, he announced Master Mo’s death at the Mo estate.”

“Last disciple? What was his name?” Han Li calmly asked, raising his eyebrow.

“He is Wu Jianming, a twenty year-old pretty face. Rumors have it that he has already inherited Mo Juren’s teachings and his martial arts are incomparably high.” Sun Ergou carefully told Han Li. At this moment, he already realized something. He was certain that this person was somehow related to the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association, and seemed to be paying close attention to that Young Master Wu.

“In addition....” Sun Ergou seemed as if he wanted to say something, but didn’t dare to.

“If you have something to say, then speak frankly! Don’t hold back! If this information is true, I will bestow upon you great rewards.”

“I have heard people say that this Young Master Wu is intimate with the Master Mo’s daughter, Mo Yuzhu. I have also heard that they will soon marry each other.” Hearing that there would be compensation, Sun Ergou spoke the truth freely, with a smile on his face.

“Marriage!” Han Li chuckled and suddenly stood up.

He paced back and forth several times in the room. Afterwards, he looked up to the ceiling and stopped. He seemed to be thinking of something.

“Hear this well! Your mission is quite simple. From today on, you will secretly gather information for me regarding the Mo Estate. As for Young Master Wu, the more details about him, the better.”

“Take this silver. If this affair goes well, there will be even more rewards! Go handle it.” Han Li casually tossed Sun Ergou a pouch of silver.

“I will follow your orders. Esteemed Young Master, please be at ease, for I will handle this matter well. This humble man will no longer trouble you and shall take his leave.” Sun Ergou clutched the silver in his hands and walked out, beaming with joy. Before leaving, he had even took the time to politely close the door.

“This esteemed Young Master is truly generous with his money. All he wants me to do is a trivial task of gathering information. It seems that choosing to follow this person on that day was truly the right choice!” Sun Ergou excitedly thought. At this moment, the matter of the Rotten Heart Pill had been pushed to the back of his head.

After seeing Sun Ergou’s happy face as he walked out, Han Li lightly sighed. He suddenly felt somewhat regretful. He had been here for a mere two days and had already given away so much silver. This made him feel like a money squanderer.

“It is no matter. This silver could be considered as silver from Doctor Mo’s account, with even with the addition of a bit of interest,” Han Li thought, finding joy in his sorrow.

“However, this Young Master Wu Jianming is truly a clever person for actually trying to be the first to use his own identity to infiltrate the Mo Estate, effectively acquiring power and wealth simultaneously. His courage is certainly admirable!” Han Li stroked his nose with a cold smile.

“It seems that a visit to the Mo Estate is inevitable. Otherwise, the Precious Warm Yang Jade will not be included in the dowry and instead will lie in that person’s hand,” Han Li thought, somewhat regretfully.

Chapter 106: Blue-Clothed Man

On Southern District's busiest street, South Hill Street, there was a huge residence the size of several acres. The residence's courtyard had a large black gate from which a hanging sign revealed two words: Mo Estate. Beneath the sign, eight large, imposing men were stationed evenly on both sides of the gate. Each of these formidable men held his head high and chest out with complete concentration. With just a glance, people would never dare to look down upon their well-trained and valiant appearances.

The three-story Fragrant Restaurant was just across the street from the Mo Estate. The popularity of this large restaurant resounded in the entire Jia Yuan City. In addition, its signature drink, Hundred Scents, was famous for being a great wine, and it attracted many famous customers who passed by.

It was currently time for the midday meal. As a result, the Fragrant Restaurant was packed with people. All the tables from the first floor to the third floor were packed with eating patrons.

On the road, those who were about to pass by restaurant would smell the strong aroma of food and drool with hunger, completely captivated by the smell.

On the second story, a youth sat next to the window, watching the street. There were quite a few tasty side dishes on his table, along with a bottle of the famous "Hundred Scents". Behind the youth stood a large, intimidating man. This youth was none other than Han Li, who was scouting for information.

At this moment, Han Li gazed down at something from the window. He turned a small wine cup that was filled to the brim in his hand, but his food sat on the table, untouched. Overall, he seemed absent-minded and careless.

Han Li shot a tilted glance at the nearby Mo Estate before looking down to the streets below him. His face's expression didn't change in the

slightest. Raised his head to drink the cup of wine, he continued to look outside mysteriously.

Han Li had already asked about Doctor Mo's two biological daughters and his adopted daughter. They had all grown up to become as delicate as a flower, as refined as a precious jade, beautiful and charming. They were known as Jia Yuan City's three great beauties. As a result, they were often referred to as the three prides of the Mo Estate.

Because of their beauty's great fame, they have been wooed by far too many young masters and heroic elites to count.

Among these women was Mo Yuzhu, a peerless beauty. Amongst the three, she was the one who was the most pursued. Thus, the news of her betrothal roused a great ruckus and broke the hearts of the men who were trying to woo her. There were a few martial artists that had challenged this Young Master Wu one after another. Wu Jian Ming ended up defeating sixteen of these rivals of love in succession, thus consolidating his reputation as a peerless martial artist and causing him to be inseparable and closely intimate with Mo Yuzhu.

Han Li thought that this matter was truly somewhat amusing and ridiculous. Others didn't know that this Young Master Wu had some sort of inside information. However, Han Li was aware of the entire situation.

Wu Jianming was sure to have been dispatched from Doctor Mo's enemy school. It seemed that the Doctor Mo's long absence had caused his enemies to grow suspicious; this Young Master Wu had probably arrived to scout out the situation. Han Li did not know by what means he had been able to obtain the trust of the Mo Estate, but the letter alone probably shouldn't have been enough to easily convince Doctor Mo's wives.

Han Li used his finger to lightly tap the table as he contemplated about the matter.

"Young Master, please sit here! The dishes you ordered should arrive at once." The waiter wearing a short, white jacket hurriedly led a blue-clothed man, who was twenty-seven to twenty-eight years old, to the

second floor. In addition, the waiter had the man sit at an empty table next to Han Li. He then hastily returned to the first floor to take care of the other customers.

This blue-clothed man was handsome. He had thick eyebrows, big eyes, and somewhat of a heroic air about him.

After he sat down, he took a quick glimpse around his surroundings and just happened to meet Han Li's gaze.

Han Li felt a profound indescribable valiance from within the man's gaze that made him feel as if his very being was being absorbed. After a moment of shock, Han Li quickly turned his head away as his complexion faintly changed.

This person was also greatly surprised. However, after giving Han Li a cold glance, he immediately turned his head, no longer paying any heed to Han Li.

Han Li's complexion turned somewhat pale. Just a moment ago, a glimpse at that person had given him a feeling like that of having one's guts seen from inside out, overwhelming him with great shock.

This was Han Li's first time experiencing such a glance, the kind of glance that made him feel as if his entire being had been completely exposed.

After the blue-clothed man waited for his dishes to fill the table, he began to eat. Not only did he eat quite heartily, he also ate as if there were no one else there.

At this moment, the frustrated Han Li was somewhat restless and worried.

Although he currently didn't use the Heaven's Eye Technique to observe the man, he felt quite a large amount of spiritual energy faintly emitting from the man's body, making Han Li stiff from awe. He clearly understood from this person's magic power that the man's cultivation no doubt was far deeper than his own.

Back when he looked at the cultivators Yu Zhitong and Saint of Golden

Light, he had only seen feeble, pathetic magic powers that completely lacked the fundamental essence of life. Upon his encounters with them, he had been able to easily get rid of them both. Thus, Han Li still didn't understand a lot about cultivators. In his mind, cultivators were a mysterious existence. He truly didn't know how he should respond to another cultivator stronger than himself.

“Could I not treat this blue-clothed man like the Saint of Golden Light and unceremoniously eliminate him with my own hand?” Han Li's mind could not help but think in the worst direction.

While Han Li's thoughts were in turmoil and fear, the blue-clothed man had finished eating. He wiped his mouth with a hand towel, dropped a silver ingot on the table, and left like a breeze. From the beginning until the end, he never looked at Han Li again after their initial glance; it seemed that the man had completely forgotten about Han Li.

Han Li waited until after this person had completely left the restaurant before exhaling deeply and lying down on his chair, paralyzed. Although the time during which the blue-clothed man ate was short, Han Li felt as if an entire day had passed by. The stress placed upon his mind was far too great. He felt as if he had just fought a battle of life and death.

At this moment, the blue-clothed person appeared at the corner of the street. A thirty-year old man wearing a yellow jacket was waiting there for him.

“Old Fourth, why have you come so late? We still have to meet up with Eldest Brother and the others!” The yellow-jacketed man had some discontent in his voice.

“Hehe! Second Eldest Brother, don't be angry! It's just that I haven't had mortal food for several years. I just went to have a taste!” The blue-clothed person said with a joyful smile.

“You glutton! How many times do I have to say this? We Immortal cultivators should cleanse our heart of desires and abstain from gluttony, but you never listen! Your consumption will, at the very least, damage your nature greatly.” The yellow-jacketed man glared at the blue-clothed

person and sourly lectured him.

“Hehe! I know, I know, you don’t have to tell me that again! Oh yeah, back at the restaurant, I saw another cultivator.” The blue-clothed person tried to change the topic, hastily mentioning his encounter with Han Li.

“Oh! Really? Was his magic power deep or shallow?” Sure enough, this had captured the yellow-jacketed man’s attention.

“His magic power was quite light. It seemed as if his cultivation base had just reached the seventh or eighth layer. He barely has the qualifications to participate in the Ascended Immortal Assembly.

“This truly does not make sense. With such shallow magic power, did he come to the Lan Province to exploit some sort of opportunity? Could it be that he truly believes that he will come across unexpected success and obtain the final victory at the great Ascended Immortals Assembly?” The blue-clothed man flung these words from his mouth.

“Is he young or old?”

“He looked to be seventeen to eighteen years old.”

“If that is the case, he definitely followed his elders here in order to increase his experience and broaden his horizons. I reckon that in the Ascended Immortal Assembly ten years from now, this talent would genuinely be able to participate.” The yellow-jacketed man said with a smile.

“I say! When you say it like that, his talent can be considered decent. If he comes back in ten years, he could reach my level.” The blue-clothed man said proudly.

“Stop boasting! Your cultivation base has merely reached the tenth layer. Every year the Ascended Immortal Assembly produces many cultivators at this level. Once you’ve trained to the eleventh or twelfth layer, then you will be given the qualifications to boast.” The yellow-jacketed man said while laughing cheerfully.

“Truly, if I hadn’t used the Foundation Building Pellet, I could have trained to a level higher than the tenth layer, but then, what Ascended

Immortal Assembly could I have participated in? I wouldn't have been able to find a master." The blue-clothed man pouted and murmured before following the yellow-jacketed man and leaving the area.

Chapter 107: Mo Yuzhu

Han Li naturally did not know about the conversation between the blue-clothed man and the yellow-jacketed man. He was still celebrating the fact that he had just escaped from a calamity. Although he was angered by the blue-clothed man's disregard for him, Han Li was extremely clear about the disparity in their strengths. Now that he had "escaped", he felt as though he had just escaped death, so Han Li became extremely relaxed.

After his encounter with the blue-clothed man, Han Li's heart couldn't calm down, so he could not recover his initially peaceful state of mind. Signing, Han Li stood up and prepared to leave the inn.

At this moment, the sounds of horses galloping suddenly rang out in the large street outside of the inn. The sound was getting closer and closer as the horses galloped into the vicinity.

He was just about to stand up, but his attention was piqued. He sat back down and cast his gaze once again to the large street. According to the report by Sun Ergou, the sounds that the incoming horses were making was the sign that the Most Estate's eldest daughter, Mo Yuzhu, was returning back to the city from her travels outside. Rumors had it that this precious lady from the Mo Estate didn't enjoy doing what other girls her age did. Ever since she was young, she only showed interest in wielding the spear and becoming the leader of a gang. Thus, her elders organized an expert from the Fearsome Flood Dragon to teach her martial arts.

What was truly shocking was that this Miss Mo especially loved hunting, a sport that was supposed to be an activity exclusive to males. Every two to three days, Miss Mo would travel to the forest outside the city to hunt. This incited the various clans' young masters, who wanted to woo her, to go hunting with her, chasing after eagles and hounds in hopes of obtaining her good will. Naturally, after Young Master Wu had arrived, he too joined in this activity.

After Han Li had heard the news, he was also curious about this eldest daughter from the Mo Estate. After all, a girl with such a character was rarely seen. He hoped that such a lady wouldn't disappoint him.

Now, there were over ten horse riders galloping from the end of the street. The frontmost riders consisted of a man and a woman. The male had a pair of sword-shaped eyebrows, a bright gaze, a lanky figure, and the look of a handsome, heroic youth. The female was wearing a fiery red hunting suit, along with a purple-colored veil to cover her face, hiding her facial features.

In the blink of an eye, the group of hunters passed the front of the inn, past Han Li's sight, and finally stopped at the gate of the Mo Estate.

The two burly guards who were originally standing there immediately greeted them. One of the guards, a man with a face full of pockmarks, respectfully greeted:

"Eldest Miss and Master Wu, both of you are back. How was today's harvest?"

"Not too bad! Tang Er, lead the horse away and help me take care of this wild game." The female wearing the hunting suit ordered. Before she dismounted her horse, she extended her hand to take off the veil that had been covering her face, revealing a face that could startle hearts and move souls.

"Roger that, Miss!" The one named Tang Er showed that he dared not to even gaze upon the enchanting visage of this female as he hurriedly took over the reins and led the horse away, walking towards a side gate.

Although the inn and the Mo Estate were a distance away, Han Li could still see about seventy to eighty percent of the girl's features as he involuntarily drew in a huge breath. That shining snow-white skin, that dainty little nose, those black, sparkling eyes, and those ruby red lips were all capable of sinking fishes and causing geese to fall from the skies.

"This lady is none other than Mo Yuzhu! No wonder she's capable of causing all the young masters in Jia Yuan City to go crazy for her. For such a supreme beauty, even toppling over empires wouldn't be strange."

Han Li could not help but to think of her in such a way.

By this time, the other hunters behind the handsome youth had all dismounted. Servants came forth and led their horses away.

The youth smiled as he walked in front of Mo Yuzhu and whispered something to her, causing Miss Mo's face to redden. She gently hammered the shoulder of the male youth before shyly glancing at him and eventually running through the gate. The youth laughed as he walked inside with a elegant demeanor.

"This person was Wu Jianming? He really does know how to coax a girl. In any case, his looks are still passable." Han Li sourly stated in his heart. He knew that if they were to compete based on looks, there was no way for him to win against the handsome youth.

"It seems that Mo Yuzhu and this handsome young master have a deep relationship!" He furrowed his brows, feeling slightly pressured. It seemed to him that this matter would not be settled as easily as he had imagined.

"No matter what, I must obtain and secure the Precious Warm Yang Jade. After all, there is an extraordinary yin poison in my body that might explode earlier than the predicted date!" Han Li was deeply worried and anxious.

He contemplated about the Mo Estate again before summoning the waiter, settling his bill, and returning to the inn that he was staying at.

After he pondered long and hard, Han Li decided to use the most direct and effective method. He planned to infiltrate the estate in the middle of the night and visit Madam Yan, the wife of the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association's former leader. He intended to use the items that Doctor Mo had left for him and expose that imposter in the Mo Estate. As for how he was going to get the precious jade, he could only wait and see, moving step by step.

Since he had already made up his mind, Han Li no longer concerned himself regarding the consequences of his decision. He shut his eyes and began to prepare himself mentally for his night-time activities.

However, Mo Yuzhu's beautiful face kept surfacing in his mind during this span of time. No matter what he did, he wasn't able to banish his thoughts about her.

"Did I fall in love with that girl?" Han Li asked himself, somewhat unnaturally.

He consoled himself, saying, "Such a ravishing beauty, it's only normal that I would be attracted to her. I may not like her for certain."

As someone who already made half a step onto the path of cultivation, although he had never had a relationship before, Han Li still tried his best to avoid matters such as love and courtship between the opposite sex even though he had never had a relationship before.

About three in the morning, Han Li changed into a set of black clothes and sneaked out of the inn.

He lightly sped past the roof and easily evaded the patrol on the streets, arriving outside of the Mo Estate. After he checked out the, he smiled to himself, then transformed into smoke. As he drifted past the eyes of the guards, he entered into the backyard of the Mo Estate without alerting them or causing them to notice anything out of the ordinary.

Chapter 108: Entering the Mo Residence at Night

Behind the Mo Residence lay a garden, not small in size, in which many rare flowers and herbs were planted. The flowery fragrance that the garden emanated was still revitalizing even though it was night time. Han Li involuntarily breathed in deeply.

“Ai!” Han Li suddenly slightly exclaimed Although the fragrance of the flowers was thick, he could still differentiate between the familiar smells of herbal medicine.

“Someone planted medical herbs in here.” Han Li lightly smiled. This familiar herbal scent caused him to feel extremely curious about the person who had planted the herbs. It appeared that someone within the Mo Residence had inherited Doctor Mo’s medical skills.

Han Li did not dare to hesitate any longer. He continued on the little path and walked towards the areas that were lit up.

Along the way, Han Li discovered that there were quite a few hidden sentries. He would not have detected the Mo Residence’s tight security if it weren’t for his heightened senses.

Since he had already discovered the hidden sentries, sneaking past them became an extremely easy task.

Han Li stopped in front of a small, two-story building.

He chose this spot because he could sense that security was much tighter in this particular location. There were about twenty to thirty people guarding this area.

This particular two-story building was well lit; he knew that there was probably someone of extreme importance who had yet to fall asleep, which coincidentally suited his purposes.

Making use of the dark night, he moved at a lightning-fast pace, his body blinking as he arrived at the bottom of the building. Using the

strength in his legs, he easily jumped up onto the second story of the building. The whole process took but an instant. The surrounding sentries did not even notice that Han Li had already infiltrated the building.

Han Li kept his body close to the walls, causing his shadow to merge into the night, before pricking his ears, trying to use his sense of hearing to discern any movements in the building. Although Han Li could only hear a single female talking, he could discern that there was more than one person in this building.

“The branch from Chang Ping Town sent over 7,300 taels of silver

“The branch from Luo Gu Town sent over 5,800 taels of silver.”

“The branch from Lan Yue Town sent over 10,500 taels of silver.”

“Wu Ling Town.....”

.....

“This is all of the profits that we received last month from our association’s various branches. Overall, it’s about twenty-five percent less than the profits we gained in the same month of last year.”

The sound of a melodious female voice that was filled with vitality drifted into Han Li’s ears. The moment that he had heard it, he speculated that it belonged to a youthful female. She was somewhat unhappy, judging from the last words she had spoken.

“Mother, these branch managers are getting bolder and bolder; the tribute they offer is increasingly less as the months go by.” The youthful girl angrily stated.

“I am well aware!” Another low, attractive voice rang out.

“Could she be one of the three ladies of the Mo Clan?” Han Li was somewhat shocked at his good luck. It seemed that the other woman in the room was Doctor Mo’s wife.

“Every time you say that you’re aware about this, why don’t you offer some ideas on how to settle this? If this continues, then all of our branches will no longer put us in their eyes one day.” The youthful girl

complained.

“I don’t have any good ideas right now. You must know that the branches are controlled by Fifth Mother. The others in the Mo Clan have no way to interfere!” The woman could only helplessly reply.

Afterwards, the exchange of words stopped, allowing silence to descend.

After several moments, the youthful girl’s voice rang out in an unwilling tone: “Mother, could it be that we allowed Fifth Mother to have sole control over the branches? After Uncle Ma and the others got into a dispute, their in-fighting pushed into branches into a position where they became the pillar of support for our Fearsome Flood Dragon Association. Mother, since you are the representative for the Flood Dragon Association, this power should instead be in your control.”

“What you said is correct. The year when your father left, he had passed the authority of the branches over to Fifth Mother, I don’t really have an excuse to interfere. And because Fifth Mother grants us a large portion of the monthly tribute, I don’t have the face to bring up the topic.” The woman replied.

“But the strength of our Fearsome Flood Dragon Association is actually extremely weak. If we don’t consolidate our strength, how can we ever rise again? Father is not thinking straight! He handed the reins of the association to you, but why did he also give Fifth Mother the authority over the branches?” The tone of her words was filled with resentment against her father.

“Stop your nonsense! Your dad did this; naturally, he had a deeper meaning behind his actions. It’s not your place to criticize!” The woman berated the youthful girl.

“I understand. I acknowledge my mistake, alright? Seems like Mother is still deeply in love with Father!” The girl acted out of the ordinary and started laughing at her mother.

“This child.....” The woman loved her daughter very much. Speechless, she could only laugh bitterly.

Han Li had already confirmed that the woman in the room was the Madam Yan he was looking for. In addition, the girl should be Mo Caihuan, the daughter of Madam Yan and Doctor Mo. He was fortunate for having found who he had been looking for in such a quick fashion.

Han Li extended his hands, touching the letter and the items left behind by Doctor Mo, and prepared to reveal himself to the two of them.

“Mother, that faker was extremely irritating! Today he found me at the garden and actually tried to shamelessly curry favor with me. He intended to to sell me a few of his strong points, trying to appear as one who is skilled in both studies and martial arts. How disgusting!” The girl added the last bit coquettishly, startling Han Li and making him withdraw the foot that he had originally extended into the room.

(TL: use of ‘faker’ is to refer to the person with the fake identity, Wu Jianming)

“You better be more courteous to the one surnamed Wu. After all, he is your fiancée in name. Don’t let him notice anything that could make him suspicious!” Madam Yan’s tone grew heavy as she reminded the girl.

“Cough! This beautiful me is always surrounded by admirers, but you want me to act as though I’ve fallen head over heels with that man? That’s too difficult of a task for me! If it were up to me, I would have run him through with a sword long ago,” the girl replied.

“This matter is also out of our control. Although we know that the one surnamed Wu is a fake and have fully investigated his background, we have no choice but to sacrifice the reputation of your older sister by interacting with him to buy some more time. After all, our enemy is too strong; if they realize that they can’t win against us through wits, they might use force, making us lose any chance of victory!” Lady Yan’s voice was filled with tiredness, revealing traces of physical and mental exhaustion in her voice.

Chapter 109: A Visit

“This man surnamed Wu is truly repulsive. Fabricating a letter and actually using Father’s name to marry Eldest Sister... truly infuriating!” Ma Caihuan uttered hatefully. Her despise for Wu Jianming was bone deep.

“Fortunately, it only mentioned your Eldest Sister. If the person that he had requested to marry was either you or Fengwu, I would truly not know what to do! With both of your temperaments, how could either of you possibly endure and falsely cope with this person?! The only one who has to suffer is Yuzhu. I don’t know when Lord Husband will return, and whether or not he will blame this mother”, Lady Yan softly told her daughter and sighed.

“Mother, how could Father blame you? Wasn’t it Eldest Sister who took the initiative to socialize with the man surnamed Wu?” Mo Caihuan immediately consoled Lady Yan.

“Foolish child, Yuzhu has no option but to do this for the sake of the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association and the Mo Estate! However, the most Mother could do was have your eldest sister interact with that fake. There is no way I can truly marry your eldest sister to him. If we cannot delay the wedding, then we will be forced to be hostile and capture him!” Lady Yan’s voice grew cold as she spoke this last sentence.

Once Lady Yan uttered these words, the room’s atmosphere returned to a state of calm. It was clear that this mother-daughter pair knew what hostility would entail.

“When will Father finally return?” Mo Caihuan faintly asked a moment later.

“When your father left, he had said that the latest that he could return would be five to six years from then, the earliest being two to three years,” Lady Yan sadly replied.

“However, it has been almost ten years. I can no longer clearly remember my father’s appearance!” Mo Caihuan slowly said.

“Be at ease! Your father happens to be an outstanding genius of his generation. With his hidden skills, there are no problems that he can’t overcome! He was definitely delayed over some important matter, and will soon return to the Mo Estate.” Although Lady Yan was speaking to her daughter, she was trying to comfort herself as well.

“Oh, that’s right, Second Sister Fengwu concocted a rejuvenating cosmetic elixir for me to give to you. Mother, why don’t you try it out? I heard its effects are quite good!” In order to break the room’s heavy atmosphere, the girl suddenly changed the subject and started chatting about another matter.

“This child...”

.....

Following along with the mother-daughter pair’s mundane gossip, Han Li didn’t hear any other useful information.

Han Li discovered from their dialogue that Lady Yan’s relationship with Doctor Mo was quite intimate. It seemed that Han Li could trust her. After a moment of contemplation, Han Li felt that personally appearing and tolerating this fake Young Master Wu was a better alternative by far than allowing the possibility of something insidious occurring. Nevertheless, Han Li had to first secure the Precious Warm Yang Jade.

As he thought as such, Han Li fished out a dragon ring, one of Doctor Mo’s keepsakes, from his bosom. He then quietly walked towards the room window and threw the ring into the room through an opening in the paper window covers.

“Dāng” The clear sound of the ring falling to the ground resounded from the room.

A moment later, Lady Yan’s voice, neither arrogant nor humble, came from inside the room.

“Who is this expert that honors my humble home with his presence? Lady Yan has not yet welcomed you. I hope you will forgive me!”

Han Li faintly smiled and refrained from replying. He heard the girl’s

frightened voice.

“How strange! How did this ring come from? This ring seems very familiar... it’s just like the ring you wear, Mother!”

“Mother! Come look!” It was clear that Mo Caihuan had picked up the ring and handed the ring over to Lady Yan.

“Dragon ring!” Lady Yan cried out in alarm.

After Han Li had heard the other party recognize the keepsake, he lightly knocked twice on the door before saying in a clear voice, “Under Teacher Mo’s orders, Disciple Han Li has come to pay his respects to Martial Mother!”

(TL: “Martial Mother”- literally. 师母 Teacher’s Wife.)

After those inside the room had heard Han Li’s words, there was an immediate and absolute silence! Han Li’s words had clearly left them in shock for a short while.

“Come in!” After a moment, Lady Yan’s voice invited him into the room.

It was at this moment that Han Li lightly opened the room door and stepped inside.

Upon entering the room, Han Li saw a beautiful, thirty year-old lady. Sitting behind her was a dainty girl around fifteen to sixteen years old. The girl and the beautiful woman shared a striking resemblance. With just a single glance, one could tell that they were close blood relatives.

At the moment, the beautiful, married Lady Yan fiddled with the dragon ring he had just thrown into the room. Han Li’s arrival had not elicited a change to her flat expression.

Mo Caihuan stood behind Lady Yan and blinked her jet-black eyes, curiously sizing Han Li up. The corner of her mouth rose and revealed a smile that was not a smile. From head to toe, she released a strange, almost supernatural smell.

After they had assessed Han Li, he walked forward and carried out a courtesy toward Lady Yan.

“Greetings to Teacher’s Fourth Wife!”

Lady Yan’s eyes blinked with a look of surprise. Although Han Li’s appearance was not astonishing, his action was quite unexpected.

However, she didn’t immediately respond to Han Li’s greeting; instead, she raised her left hand, revealing her own dragon ring.

Lady Yan gently brought together both rings. In front of their eyes, the two rings’ dragon designs fit together, without even the slightest gap.

“You are right, this keepsake is authentic! However, do you have Lord Husband’s written letter on you?” Lady Yan gently asked, now revealing a few traces of a smile.

As soon as Han Li heard this, he took out the letter that had been prepared long ago and handed it over to her with both hands without saying anything further.

Lady Yan, seeing Han Li act respectfully towards her, nodded her head in satisfaction as she accepted the letter. Then, she unfolded it and carefully read its contents.

Han Li withdrew to the side while calmly observing the expression on the face of his teacher’s wife. He thought about the change in her attitude towards him as a visiting disciple and a future son-in-law.

Chapter 110: Fox

Han Li had already read over the the contents of this letter several times. The letter was not at all complex; it merely sent word that Han Li was Doctor Mo's last disciple and that Lady Yang could place her complete trust in him. In addition, he could be used to settle any troublesome disputes the Mo Estate may currently have. As long as Han Li could preserve the Mo Estate's safety, Lady Yan was to choose one of Doctor Mo's three daughters as Han Li's bride. The letter also laid clear instructions that the dowry was to include the "Precious Warm Yang Jade". It even went as far as to say that Doctor Mo was currently occupied with an important matter and could not return and reunite with his wives. This way, Lady Yan and his other wives wouldn't have to worry about him.

(TL: “关门弟子” means a master's last disciple, which implies that Han Li is Doctor Mo's successor.)

Although Han Li could not find anything unfavorable towards him in the letter, he was certain that that the letter contained a few of Doctor Mo's tricks. Han Li knew that it was impossible for the outer writing to be so simple.

However, he could not find the method to reveal the hidden message. In addition, he wished to bring this letter to the Mo Estate as soon as possible. Only after gathering his courage did he deliver this letter to Lady Yan, but he was especially careful to monitor Lady Yan's each and every move at this moment. He truly wished that this Fourth Wife wouldn't make something out from the letter and then immediately turn hostile, demanding his arrest in order to avenge her late husband.

Fortunately, the terrible scenario that Han Li imagined did not occur. After Lady Yan finished reading the letter, she simply tensely wrinkled her brow. Her face then wore an expression of great worry as she seemed to have made some difficult decisions.

“Huan'er, go call your Second Mother and Third Mother, even your Fifth

Mother. Tell them there is news of Lord Husband!" Lady Yan turned her head and instructed Mo Caihuan with a resolute tone.

"Understood, Mother! I'll go." Mo Caihuan knew this matter was serious, so she left obediently. However, just before she left the room, she pursed her lips and smiled towards Han Li. It seemed she was rather interested in this fellow.

"You are called Han Li?" Lady Yan raised her head, revealing a graceful and elegant expression.

"That's right, Fourth Martial Mother!" Han Li sincerely replied.

"Could you tell me how Lord Husband accepted you as a disciple?" Lady Yan asked with a smile.

"I will do as you ask!" Han Li hesitated for a moment, but soon after, he felt that there was nothing to hide about the events that led to his acceptance as a disciple. Using a few select memories, he slowly told Lady Yan a summary of what had happened.

"Eight years ago, because Teacher Mo's old injury had yet to healed, he lived in seclusion at the Jing Province's Seven Mysteries Sect's Celestial Rainbow Mountains. There, I had met him for the first time upon entering the mountain..." Within Han Li's version of the course of events, three sevenths of it was false. The information that he could not divulge to Lady Yan was either completely revised or lightly skipped over. Even like this, however, the story had greatly captured Lady Yan's attention and interest.

Han Li recounted the course of events with three-sevenths being false. The information he could not divulge to Lady Yan were completely adapted or lightly skipped over. However even like this, the story had greatly captured the attention and interest of Lady Yan.

"... and that's how I became his disciple. Around three months ago, Teacher Mo was preoccupied with an important matter and was unable to spare any time to visit his family. However, he feared that he had left the Mo Estate for far too long and that there would be enemies creating trouble for his wives, so he told me to leave the mountain first, come to

the Mo Estate to find the Teacher Mo's wives and wait for the his wives' orders."

"What's so important that could prevent my Lord Husband from arriving home first?" After Lady Yan heard Han Li's adapted version of the course of events that led to his discipleship, she sighed before faintly asking this question with a trace of grief.

'Who is returning home? Doctor Mo has already been dead for soon to be two years; the corpse I buried underneath a tree is nothing but bones now!' As Han Li heard this, he somewhat laughed to himself. However, with a face of humility, he replied, "What matters? Teacher Mo did not tell me. However, I am certain that it is an absolutely important matter!" Han Li said somewhat ambiguously.

"Humph! Did your master command you to keep it a secret from us?" Lady Yan asked with an enigmatic smile. However, the tone in her words was somewhat discontent.

"It is by no means like that!" Han Li quickly said. He secretly bitterly smiled to himself. This Lady Yan was truly mistrustful!

With an unresigned appearance, Lady Yan opened her mouth to ask a few more questions.

At this moment, however, the sound of chaotic footsteps could be heard outside the room. Before the owners of the feet entered the room a lovely and charming voice spoke.

"Fourth Sister, I hear there is news of Lord Husband. Is this true? That devil left us ten years ago; does he want us sisters to become grass widows?!"

Han Li had been distracted with this sweet voice, but soon after realizing what was said, he became startled.

'This great aunt is far too bold!' Han Li thought, amazed.

"Third Sister, pay more attention to your words. There is still another person in this room!" A slightly rougher woman's voice said in an angry fashion.

"I know this already! However, I heard the that person delivering the news is Lord Husband's close disciple! It is impossible to keep up pretenses! What do you say, Fifth Sister!" The charming voice had said, slightly happily.

"Impossible. Since Fourth Sister has called us to come, this man should at the very least be seventy to eighty percent trustworthy." An ice cold voice said.

"That's right. Fourth Sister's judgement is truly admirable!" The sweet, charming voice said, giggling. It was unknown whether this was said ironically or in genuine praise for Lady Yan.

After Han Li heard these words, he stole a glance at Lady Yan, who was pressing her hand against her head with a helpless expression on her face. It seemed that the owner of that lovely voice often gave her headaches.

The room door finally opened, and several beautiful women entered in succession. Mo Caihuan followed, entering last. However, she pouted with her small red mouth, appearing somewhat melancholic.

The frontmost woman was approximately thirty-one to thirty-two years old. She was tall, beautiful and composed with delicate features, and there was a scholarly air about her. She must have been talented since a very young age.

Han Li inwardly nodded his head and brought his gaze to the young woman next to her. This one appeared twenty-three to twenty-four years old.

The moment Han Li saw this woman's appearance, he felt his brains buzz. For an instant, he thought he had seen a lost goddess. His entire person had sunk into her gorgeous beauty and was unable to free himself. This woman's tender, beautiful figure was unexpectedly somehow even more gorgeous than Mo YuZhu, whom he had seen during the day. In addition, the woman's incomparable grace was something Mo Yuzhu couldn't possibly have. If one were to say there were truly fox-spirits on this Earth, Han Li would unconditionally be convinced as this woman was

a completed transformation.

Han Li was currently swooningly dizzy. Without Han Li knowing why, a thread of cold Qi from his Dantian suddenly escaped and flowed along his meridians toward the center of his head. After it completed one circulation, Han Li suddenly cleared his head.

After recovering his mind, Han Li was startled and didn't dare to look to look at this woman again. He hastily avoided her gaze.

'This young woman could cause the death of an entire country. With the mere look, she can turn a man's soul and spirit upside down! Does she not know that her own exceptional appearance possesses demonic power?! Or is this some sort of trained seduction technique?' Han Li speculated while being overwhelmed with shock.

The young woman saw Han Li look at her, but apart from being somewhat infatuated, he soon regained his mind. Her eyes could not help but flash a look of surprise.

Chapter 111: Beautiful Woman

Han Li quietly used his Eternal Spring Arts to stabilize his mind before daring to even lift his head. His eyes skipped over the alluring woman and moved on to the last woman.

The last wife to enter appeared to be twenty-six to twenty-seven years old. Although she was a charming beauty, one look at her ice-cold face would stop anyone in his or her tracks. In addition, ever since she entered the room, her cold stare had been aimed straight at Han Li.

Lady Yan saw these people come in and stood from her seat, gently greeting them.

“Greetings Second Sister and Third Sister! Fifth Sister has also come!”

“Fourth Sister, you are too formal. We are all of the same family; there is no need to be so polite!” Without waiting for the woman in front to speak, the extremely bewitching young woman covered her almond mouth and laughed. That laugh contained an alluring charm, causing Han Li to experience a burst of desire and a shaken spirit. He was speechless without end.

“Little Sister doesn’t dare. Sisters, please take a seat.” Lady Yan slightly smiled and offered her own chair to the wife in the front. She did not sit until after the wife sat.

The one called “Fifth Sister” was an elegant and refined woman. She silently sat across from Lady Yan.

After the married women entered, Mo Caihuan knowingly closed the door and moved behind her mother. Her bright full moon eyes were spinning randomly across the room. It was unknown what exactly she was thinking.

“This youngster is the one that delivered the message?” The woman of about thirty years of age looked at Han Li and faintly asked.

“That’s right. According to the letter he delivered, this is Lord Husband’s successor.” Lady Yan easily replied. Soon after, she said

respectfully to Han Li, "This is your Second Martial Mother. Are you not going to pay your respects?"

(TL Note: "Martial Mother"- Literally 师母 Teacher's Wife. Instead of 'Second Martial Mother' it could be 'Teacher's Second Wife' and so on.)
"I pay my respects to Second Martial Mother!" Sharp-witted, Han Li stepped forward and formally bowed to the married woman.

"Stand up! Since this is Lord Husband's favored disciple, there is no need to be overly polite." The married woman said with a smiling expression.

"This is your Third Martial Mother and Fifth Martial Mother." Lady Yan pointed to the abnormally gorgeous young woman and the elegant and refined woman, introducing them one by one to Han Li.

"Greetings to Third Martial Mother and Fifth Martial Mother!" Han Li saw the young married women to be no more than a few years older than him. After a second of hesitation, he also bowed courteously.

Han Li looked at Lady Yan with a face of doubt. She faintly smiled and said with a warm voice, "Your Third Martial Mother stopped the aging of her face with a technique. Although she looks to only be of about twenty years, she is about the same age as your Second Martial Mother."

After Han Li heard this, he inwardly nodded his head, satisfied that his own guess hadn't been too far off. This alluringly beautiful young woman naturally practiced an unusual secret art, otherwise how else could she have captivated him with her mere appearance and rendered unable to control himself.

"Second Sister, this is Lord Husband's hand-written letter, please look over it!" Lady Yan handed Han Li's letter to Second Wife Lady Li. After Lady Li finished reading it, she passed the letter to the other two wives.

Once the elegant and refined young woman, the last wife to read the letter, finished looking over it, the several wives were stunned into completely silence.

Even the seemingly frivolous and gorgeous young wife, Lady Liu, had a solemn expression on her face. Completely lacking the boldness and

alluring charm she possessed a moment ago, Lady Liu was instead showing an unexpected composure.

When Han Li saw the appearance of Doctor Mo's several wives, he could not help but grow uneasy. He did not know what significant information the letter had revealed to cause these wives to be so serious.

However, Han Li's calm expression hadn't changed since he first entered the room, making the wives think that he was reliable and had the bearing of a general.

"Han Li! Your Teacher's letter has shocked us Martial Mothers far too greatly, so we'll need to properly talk this over. You've come here from far away, surely you must be tired. You should spend the night here at the Mo Estate. Tomorrow, we will call you for questioning." Since Lady Yan had held the power of the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association in her hand for several years, each and every one of her movements possessed an unspeakable dignity. Ultimately, she was the first to speak and instruct Han Li.

"This junior follows your orders!" Han Li replied with the complete obedience.

The other wives did not block Lady Yan; it seemed they also agreed to have this outsider Han Li withdraw so that they could discuss a few sensitive matters.

"Huan'er! Bring your father's disciple Han to the rear residence and find him a clean room for him to have a proper rest," Lady Yan ordered Mo Caihuan.

"Xi! I got it! Senior Disciple Han Li, follow me!" Mo Caihuan blinked her eyes several times, slightly wrinkled her nose, and started to be somewhat unwilling. However, she immediately thought better of it and agreed with a smile across her face.

"You are forbidden from bothering your Senior Disciple! Otherwise you will be punished by clan rules!" Lady Yan knew the thoughts of her good-for-nothing daughter like the back of her hand, thus giving her a verbal warning in advance.

“Alright, I understand!” Pouting her face, the young girl unwillingly agreed.

Han Li was speechless! If Lady Yan hadn’t said anything, would this dainty young woman have played some tricks on him?

Han Li looked at Mo Caihuan with a peculiar gaze, and for the first time, he no longer saw this girl as adorable.

As a result of her mother’s interference, Mo Caihuan dispiritedly walked out the door. Han Li followed behind with an unmoving expression.

Waiting several moments after Han Li had left the room, Lady Yan broke the silence in the room with her solemn voice.

“Fifth Sister, I’ll have to inconvenience you to take a look around and see whether or not that boy has truly left or if he has secretly returned and is hiding somewhere. We’re still not sure!”

After the elegant, refined Lady Wang heard this, she wordless left the room, and disappeared into the dark.

“Fourth sister, you overestimated that boy. How could he possibly be so skilled?” A light flashed in Third Wife’s pretty eyes.

“Third Sister, you’ve truly forgotten about one thing. A disciple of our Lord Husband can’t possibly be ordinary.”

“I believe our Mo Estate is quite heavily guarded. What’s more, this building is an important location where I handle the association’s affairs. Not far from here, there are twenty to thirty hidden sentries densely standing guard. But even with all of our defenses, he was still able to stealthily infiltrate his place without drawing my or Caihuan’s attention. Do you think that this is something an ordinary expert can achieve?” Lady Yan quietly said.

Chapter 112: Hidden Message

“From Fourth Sister’s argument, it appears that the youth named Han truly has some ability!” Second Wife Li gently said, while slightly wrinkling her eyebrows.

Third Wife hesitated a moment before sighing and speaking her mind. “There is no need to say anymore. His concentration is already far greater than the fake’s. I remember when that pretty boy Wu saw my face, my Grand Heavenly Fox Technique had infatuated him for an entire day before he recovered. The one named Han was initially only somewhat bewildered, but he had immediately cleared his mind afterward; it can clearly be seen that his mental energy is outstanding. He is by no means ordinary!”

After hearing these words, the three wives became quiet. Everyone appeared thoughtful, as if they all had something bad to say.

After a moment, Lady Yan bitterly smiled and took the initiative to speak first. “With such a ferocious person, it’s impossible to discern whether or not he will bring fortune or disaster to our Mo Estate.”

“Take out the secret letter. Once everyone sees it, it will be clear!” These words came from outside the room, and were not spoken by Lady Yan, but rather by the refined, elegant Fifth Wife. She walked into the room.

“I have already inspected the surrounding area very carefully. There are no outsiders within a two-hundred meter radius, and the sentry guards were reinforced as well!” Fifth Wife said expressionlessly.

Lady Yan lowered her head in thought and eventually opened her mouth.

“You all surely remember the words Lord Husband gave before he left. After he departed, if someone delivered an unmarked letter without a hidden message, it would prove that he is safe and that we may feel at ease. However, if the letter was marked and concealed a hidden message, then it would definitely contain news that would be far from good. We must prepare ourselves mentally. As for this letter...”

“We all saw that the letter was marked and concealed a hidden message. Regardless of how grim the news is, this is something we must face sooner or later. Let us take out and read the true letter.” Third Wife’s voice was no longer sweet and charming, but was instead brimming with sorrow.”

“Very well! Since everyone has finished preparing themselves, we will now uncover the hidden message!” Lady Yan said decisively.

No longer hesitating, she grabbed a teacup and kettle from a nearby desk and proceeded to fill the cup halfway with cool water. She then grabbed her dragon-shaped ring and lightly twisted it several times, unexpectedly separating it in two and thus exposing a hidden, white medicinal powder.

Lady Yan carefully poured the medicine powder into the teacup and then looked to the people at her sides.

Second Wife Li gazed at Lady Yan and was the first to stand.

She gracefully arrived in front of the desk and raised her hand. Her pure white finger unexpectedly also wore a similar ring.

Lady Li took out a small amount of medicinal powder from the ring and poured it into the teacup. However, her powder was red, and seemed to differ from Lady Yan’s.

Third Wife and Fifth Wife followed with similar actions. They both had dragon rings that contained a yellow and a black medicinal powder respectively.

Lady Yan waited until after everyone had finished before picking up the teacup and lightly swirling it. As a result, the originally multicolored liquid actually became clear.

“Finished! The water has become clear. Second Sister, you are the most skilled with your hands; it would be best if Elder Sister were to smear the paper!” Lady Yan modestly said to Second Wife Li.

After Lady Li heard this, she faintly smiled. With the letter and the medicinal water, she began to work.

During this short amount of time, aside from Lady Li smearing the medicinal water on the letter's surface, there was a complete silence, causing the room's atmosphere to become more tense.

"It is done. The letter has been completely smeared. Next, we should have Fifth Sister help dry this letter with her inner strength!" Lady Li straightened her body, wiping the fragrant sweat off her forehead and speaking to Fifth Wife with a smile.

The cool, elegant young woman nodded her head and swiftly took the damp letter.

She then extended her other hand, and with a slight use of force, a faint, blazing heat was emitted from her palm. She placed her palm three inches away from the letter and slowly dried it.

After a short period of time, the letter was completely dried, and the letter's black ink had completely disappeared. In its place appeared some faint red handwriting. This was Doctor Mo's scheme to use Han Li to deliver a message to his wives, a hidden message.

Han Li wasn't aware about what happened in the room after he left. At the moment, there was a little demoness standing before him that caused him to feel a large headache!

While on their way, this third young lady Mo had unexpectedly and brazenly requested a so-called "first meeting gift" from her Senior Apprentice Brother.

"What kind of present would Junior Apprentice Sister like?" Without a better option, Han Li helplessly pinched his nose and prepared himself to satisfy her request.

"Any precious stones... jewelry... or perhaps something fun and interesting will do! I'm not very picky! Actually, if you don't have anything, then giving seven to eight thousand taels of silver will also do. This can be regarded as your test!" Mo Caihuan said innocently without a trace of guilt as she blinked her large dark eyes.

"Seven to eight thousand taels of silver?" When Han Li heard this, he

nearly fell to the floor. This little demoness was like a lioness widely opening her mouth, not the least bit fearful for her life.

“Taking into account everything I have on hand, I don’t possess such an amount of silver. Even if I did, it would be impossible to give it to her. Does she take me for a foolish squanderer!” Although Han Li thought this, his expression didn’t change. However, looking at the girl’s expression, there was quite a bit of meaning in her gaze.

Mo Caihuan was quite clever. With just a glance, she could make out some of Han Li’s thoughts.

She slanted her small mouth and deliberately shouted in surprise, “Senior Apprentice Brother Han, you don’t have a gift to commemorate your first meeting with this adorable Junior Apprentice Sister? You should know that the year when I first met Young Master Wu, he gave me a ten thousand silver banknotes as pocket money!”

The moment Han Li heard this, he grew angry! Of course, the one surnamed Wu is scheming for your family’s wealth to receive twice the amount in return! I don’t have the slightest intention to give you such a gift. In addition, your father planted a yin poison in me. My small life could end at any moment!

Han Li was furious, but he simply looked up to the sky. Without moving, he looked at this little demoness and began wondering which item he had on hand was worth the least!

Mo Caihuan saw this Han Li as an unsophisticated, dark boy who was actually playing the fool and not saying a word. He did not take notice of her, causing her heart to be somewhat worried.

Ever since last year, after she had swindled a great amount of money from Young Master Wu, she dreamed of another person to take advantage of every night.

Now after all that trouble, she had another opportunity. But this guy, who seemed to be her father’s true disciple, was unmoved and even had a face thicker than a city wall. How could he act so hard and indifferently toward such a cute girl as herself? He didn’t have the slightest bit of

sympathy! Did he not notice her practiced tears quickly flowing down her cheeks? Still remaining indifferent, he was truly infuriating!

Chapter 113: Winding Fragrance Pill

The air in the night skies could not have been considered cold, but Mo Caihuan's delicate face was slightly turning green. Both of her eyes were ruthlessly staring at Han Li. In her heart, she was silently gnashing her teeth at this thick-skinned Senior Apprentice Brother.

At the moment, both of them had been standing on this little path that wound through the back courtyard for a quarter of an hour while suffering from the cold. They did not move as much as a single step. Originally, after Mo Caihuan realised that Han Li was impervious to her three ultimate moves—acting cute, acting coquettishly, and using tears—she could only helplessly gnash her teeth in frustration and stop walking. She initially intended to use these moves to trap Han Li, but succeeded to no avail. Now she could only unwillingly and pitifully stare at Han Li, locking her gaze with him, hoping that her opponent would give in.

But upon seeing the pitiful state Mo Caihuan was in, Han Li involuntarily let out a laugh.

Her expressions actually reminded Han Li of his good brother Li Feiyu. Previously, whenever Li Feiyu had wanted Han Li to help him with something, he would use the exact same expression on his face, hoping to move Han Li into helping him. After some time, Han Li became completely impervious to these kinds of expressions.

Thus, as Mo Caihuan used her best pitiful puppy look onto Han Li, Han Li remained motionless, standing there while admiring Mo Caihuan's performance. He frequently shook his head, indicating his sarcasm.

Underneath Han Li's vicious counterattack, Mo Caihuan was utterly defeated. She could only stop the puppy look she had been utilizing until now and exchange it with a ferocious look of rage.

Actually, Mo Caihuan already started to regret her actions. If her mother were to find out about this, she was afraid that not only would she not be able to con anything from Han Li, but she would also taste the discipline of their clan's rules.

As she thought of this, she glared hatefully at Han Li. This little bumpkin, couldn't he just give something to her? Didn't he know that girls exist to be coaxed? He was truly nothing but a country bumpkin!

As of the moment, she had already forgotten about her outrageous request she had demanded earlier from Han Li.

Although Han Li had no experience in coaxing girls, he knew that he would nonetheless have to borrow the strength of the Mo Residence and thus could not afford to offend them. As a result, after Mo Caihuan's anger burned for some time, he slowly inserted his hands into his robes, trying to find a suitable trinket to appease this little demoness.

Han Li finally took out a green jade bottle. Inside the bottle, there were a few flaming red pills that release an extremely strong fragrance.

These pills were known as the "Winding Fragrance Pills". Taken by royal concubines, this pill had no other other effect other than causing the one who ingested the pill to emit a mesmerizing fragrance. Not only did this fragrance last for a long time and was pleasant to smell, but it also could provide the additional effect of protecting the user from insect bites. That was why this pill was a favorite among the royal concubines.

Treating the Winding Fragrance Pill as a gift for the young girl, however, was quite a pity. Concocting this pill required a few main ingredients that were rare and precious. Even in such a prosperous place as the royal capital, the main ingredients were always found to be in short supply, unable to meet the royal court's demand. In the end, the pill had been lost with the passage of time.

Han Li would never concoct such a pill that would do nothing to aid him. But during his stay in the Seven Mysteries Sect, he finally caved in and concocted some of these pills for Li Feiyu to coax Zhang Xiuer because he was unable to withstand Li Feiyu's urging.

All he had was just one bottle with only a few pills remaining. Initially, Han Li had wanted to use these pills to cloak himself from insect bites, but now, he could only use this to coax the little demoness standing before him.

Han Li threw the jade bottle in the girl's direction. Mo Caihuan fumbled with it for a bit and finally caught the jade bottle. "What is this?" A smile finally broke out on Mo Caihuan's face. She finally received a gift from this petty man in front of her! Although this was nothing much, this was sufficient to light up a smile on Mo Caihuan's face.

"This pill is known as the Winding Fragrance Pill, and its effects are very mystical. It can....." Han Li explained the pill's effects to Mo Caihuan, causing her to be extremely happy and satisfied.

Much to Han Li's surprise, after the girl opened the jade bottle and sniffed the fragrance, she immediately closed the lid of the bottle and assumed a defensive stance. With a "defending against perverts" gaze, she looked at Han Li and carefully said:

"This pill is not a pill that knocks people unconscious or works as an aphrodisiac right? Why is the fragrance so familiar to the aphrodisiacs that my sisters described?. Are you planning to do something perverted to me!?"

After hearing this, Han Li was stunned for a prolonged period of time, becoming completely speechless. He suddenly felt like vomiting blood. This girl's thoughts were too hard to predict! To think that she actually likened the fragrance of the Winding Fragrance Pill to an aphrodisiac!

Now, Han Li don't even know whether should he be impressed this lady's cautiousness or cry loudly because of an unjust accusation! "Looking at your reactions, this pill seems to be authentic, but I still have to let my Second Sister experiment on it before I can use. After all, women have to place cautiousness above everything they do." Mo Caihuan told Han Li this in a righteous manner.

"Cough! Cough....., do what you will."

Speechless, Han Li could only cough to mask the embarrassment on his face. He felt that it would be better for him to maintain a distance between himself and this little demoness. If he didn't, he would never know when his depression would push him to his death.

"However, if this pill does have all the effects you listed, I shall consider

you to have passed the test! After today, if you ever require any help in the Mo Residence, you can look for Caihuan! I will just require some small compensation, but in return, I will settle your problems for you.” Mo Caihuan shook the bottle while happily smiling.

“Okay, Junior Apprentice Sister! Senior Apprentice Brother does have something that requires your help.” Han Li recovered his former disposition as he smiled insincerely. As he replied to Mo Caihuan, he thought evilly in his heart, “Seeking assistance from you, a money grubber? In your dreams!”

Mo Caihuan naturally could not hear Han Li’s inner thoughts. She felt satisfied because Han Li had acquiesced to her. All of a sudden, she felt that Han Li was pretty interesting fellow and was even quite comely to look at.

“Let’s go, Senior Apprentice Brother! I will find a bigger and better room for you so you don’t have to suffer!” Mo Caihuan smiled brilliantly as she led the way.

Standing behind her, Han Li finally heaved a sigh of relief as he slowly followed her footsteps.

‘Such a strange girl. He would never be together with her. Don’t say that this bossy miss suddenly fell in love with an ordinary person like him. Even if she really did fall in love with him, he would straight out reject her. Just based on her unreasonable actions that were already so tough for Han Li to deal with, he could never endure it if they really got together.’ Han Li silently thought in his heart, decisively removing Mo Caihuan’s name from the list of potential candidates for his wife-to-be.

(TL: Han Li is talking about himself in third person)

Chapter 114: Yan Ge's Infatuation

Han Li finally went into one of the side rooms of the Mo Estate in order to retire for the night. Mo Caihuan was tactful enough to not linger around, and she quickly excused herself. Her sudden behaviour as a refined lady left Han Li somewhat surprised.

Han Li did not know whether there would still be danger as he was still unclear about the attitude of the people in Mo Estate. As a result, he was unable to get any real rest and only dozed off a little on the bed.

The next morning, while Han Li was still groggy, there was someone outside knocking the door.

"Could it be that little demoness?" Han Li frowned, but soon shook his head. "This smooth knocking sound is definitely not Mo Caihuan's style. But only a few people know that I'm staying here."

Han Li was a bit suspicious. He found a towel to wash his face, then went to open the door. A twenty year-old youth with thick eyebrows and big eyes stood outside.

Once this youth saw Han Li came out, he took a glance to look at Han Li from top to bottom, then respectfully cupped one fist in the other hand and greeted Han Li enthusiastically, "You must be Junior Apprentice Brother Han! I am Yan Ge. I could also be considered as your Eldest Apprentice Brother!"

"Yan Ge!" Han Li's thoughts raced. This person was Doctor Mo's eldest disciple.

"Haha, even though I am Master's first disciple, my aptitude is not that good. I didn't receive much of Master's own techniques and even humiliated him!" Yan Ge told Han Li frankly.

When Han Li saw that this youth was unperturbed, he immediately had a good impression towards Yan Ge and promptly returned the greeting, "Senior Apprentice Brother Yan, good morning! Please come in and talk!"

"There is no need. Several of our Martial Mothers asked me to come

here. They are looking for Junior Discipline Han for something, and they want you to make a trip down.” Yan Ge chuckled and beckoned with his hands.

Han Li was stunned for a moment when he heard this, but he swiftly nodded his head and complied. He closed the room door and walked beside Yan Ge.

Yan Ge was very interested in Han Li’s affairs. Along the way, he openly asked Han Li many things. He was extremely curious about the local customs and culture of Jing Province and asked about them endlessly.

When the two of them passed through the garden in the backyard, they unexpectedly met a young man and lady. They were Mo Yuzhu and Wu Jianming, both of whom Han Li had seen from afar yesterday. The two were walking together in the garden, like a pair of intimate lovers. It was as if Han Li’s own possessions were stolen by someone else, and that feeling left a bad taste in his mouth.

Evidently, Mo Yuzhu and Yu Jianming discovered Han Li and Yan Ge, so the former pair headed towards them. As the two sides got closer to each other, Mo Yuzhu swept a glance across the ordinary looking Han Li but didn’t say anything. However, Young Master Wu was suspicious of Han Li as he sized Han Li up.

“Senior Apprentice Brother Yan, good morning! This little brother looks unfamiliar. Whose disciple does he belong to?” Wu Jianming laughed as he asked.

“.....”

At first, Han Li thought that Elder Brother Yan, who was beside him, would take the initiative to cover for him and counter Wu Jianming’s remark. Who knew that after waiting for so long, there was still no sound from the person beside him? Feeling puzzled, Han Li can’t help but to raise his head and look at Yan Ge.

In the end, Han Li was so infuriated that he was rendered speechless.

Currently, Yan Ge looked infatuated and spellbound, gazing dumbly at

Miss Mo Yuzhu, fully into the realm of ecstasy. How could he still respond to Wu Jianming!

“This little brother is Third Madam’s distant nephew. Under the orders of my parents, I was to pay a visit to Third Madam and request a job from her.” For the lack of a better option, Han Li could only turn his head back and take matters into his own hands. Han Li spoke obsequiously while intentionally acting all embarrassed and shy.

“Oh, so it’s like this.” Once Wu Jianming heard Han Li’s words, he completely lost interest in Han Li. This was not surprising. Han Li’s outer appearance was too ordinary, and he did not possess any characteristics of a person who studied martial arts. How could this be missed by the eye of Young Master Wu.

Instead, Young Master Wu turned his head and his expression darkened. He was greatly unsatisfied with the silly look that Yan Ge was showing towards Mo Yuzhu. After all, the beautiful lady beside him was his supposed fiancée.

Right now, Han Li was close to Mo Yuzhu so he clearly saw all of her expressions. She was frowning slightly and had a somewhat displeased look. Clearly, she was not tolerant of Yan Ge’s brazen look of adoration.

“Senior Apprentice Brother Yan, if there is nothing else, Young Master Wu and I will retire first.” Mo Yuzhu’s apricot lips opened slightly. She coldly extended a small courtesy to Yan Ge and moved her delicate body to leave the area. Wu Jianming snorted at Yan Ge and chased after her without saying anything else.

Han Li watched their backs departing as the corner of his lip revealed a slight trace of an odd smile. Afterwards, he turned around to look at Senior Apprentice Brother Yan and discovered that Yan Ge was still gazing foolishly at Mo Yuzhu.

Han Li sighed. This guy was truly lovestruck. However, Miss Mo did not seem to have a good impression of him and may be frightened off by his fervent pursuit.

Han Li hit Yan Ge’s shoulders with all his strength, jolting the latter’s

body. The vacant look disappeared, and he was finally roused from his stupor.

“Sorry about that, I made a joke out of myself in front of Junior Apprentice Brother Han!” Yan Ge, who recovered back to his rational state of mind, was blushing madly. He was extremely ashamed of the spectacle he made of himself.

“It’s nothing. When facing a fair and graceful lady with a noble character to match, this is a male’s natural instinct. There is nothing to be embarrassed about.” Han Li explained while laughing.

When Yan Ge listened to Han Li’s words, he did not feel relieved. Instead, he laughed bitterly and slowly said, “Not to keep you in the dark, but I grew up together with Yuzhu. During this period of time, even though we were not childhood sweethearts, we were both innocent playmates with deep feelings for each other. Unfortunately, when Yuzhu grew up, she treated me like a brother without showing any other interest in me. As a result, after being rejected by her several times, I could only give up and wish that she finds a good husband who can give her a lifetime of happiness. But one look at Yuzhu today, I find that I am still unable to free myself from my emotions and unknowingly made a show of myself.” There was a hint of self-ridicule when Yan Ge spoke the last sentence.

Han Li did not speak again after he heard Yan Ge’s explanation. Instead, he looked at Yan Ge from head to toe, like viewing a rare antique. Previously, he only came across this kind of affectionate person from books and other stories. He never imagined that he would one day witness it with his own eyes.

If what Yan Ge said was true and sincere, Han Li didn’t know whether to admire Yan Ge’s infatuation or secretly curse him for his extreme foolishness.

On the way back, Han Li purposely used other topics to draw Yan Ge away from his thoughts and allow Yan Ge’s mood to return back to normal. The two of them talked merrily until they reached the small

building where Han Li sneaked into last night. Several of Doctor Mo's wives were already waiting there ceremoniously for Han Li's arrival, preparing to give Han Li a nice surprise.

Chapter 115: A Startling Change

Just as they reached the second floor, before Yan Ge could knock on the door, Lady Yan's voice came from within the room.

"Is it Han Li and Yan Ge?"

"That is right, Fourth Martial Mother!" Yan Ge hastily stopped and respectfully replied.

"Yan Ge, return first. Just Han Li entering the room alone will do." Lady Yan's faint voice could be heard from within. That distinct cold voice could not help but touch Han Li's heart.

"As you wish." Yan Ge was clearly very respectful of Lady Yan, and he followed her command without the slightest hesitation. After he smiled to Han Li, he quietly descended from the second floor. Only Han Li remained upstairs, waiting outside the room.

Han Li coldly looked at the room door, but instead of immediately entering, he released his spiritual awareness and scoped out the situation inside the room. He didn't wish to go in along, only to be ambushed and killed by a room of hidden soldiers, so it was better to be a bit careful!

It was very quiet in the room, and the number of people inside wasn't large. Han Li could only hear the breathing and heartbeats of Lady Yan and a few others. It appeared that there wasn't anyone that shouldn't be there. This greatly relieved Han Li.

Thus, he stepped forward and lightly knocked on the door twice. He then opened the room door, planning to take a quick look before entering. However, what he saw in the room greatly changed Han Li's complexion. His step had stiffly halted mid air.

The room was the same as the night before; the chairs, desks, and decorations were all exactly the same. The only thing different were the beautiful women's style of dress. Lady Yan and the other beautiful wives were all wearing white silk mourning clothes from head to toe. They all sat on chairs and unwaveringly gazed at Han Li with cool eyes.

Han Li's complexion turned somewhat pale. However he was not scared but rather annoyed with the deceased Doctor Mo.

It was very clear why Doctor Mo, that old fox, had forced him to move a great distance. It seemed that he had guessed correctly: that letter had contained a hidden message that gave the tigresses news of Doctor Mo's death. It was as if they were waiting for Doctor Mo's murderer to visit them voluntarily!

Han Li took a deep breath and returned his complexion to normal. He then entered the room in large strides; without a trace of politeness, he looked for a chair and arrogantly sat across from the wives. After seeing them not say a single word, he planned to observe how these women would deal with him in the end.

It was clear Han Li's completely unrestrained action was intended to tear away at their faces. However, largely against his expectation, he had thrown them into confusion. Each of their expressions having nothing in common.

Second Wife Li's expression turned green. It was clear this Han Li, who had so clearly said "Martial Mother" yesterday, was now daring to brazenly act as if he were meeting with those of the same generation. This Second Wife was born of a scholarly family and paid great attention to generational separation. Now that she had come across this chap who was unfilial towards his master, how could she not tremble with anger?

(TL: 长幼辈分之分 separation of the young and old generations-respect your granny, kids)

Third Wife Liu differed greatly from Lady Li. Not only did she refrain from getting angry, she also looked toward Han Li with a very interested expression. However, because of her astonishing glamor, Han Li didn't dare to look at her directly, and had simply looked at her with a sweeping gaze.

Lady Yan and the cool, elegant Lady Wang were about the same. They wordlessly looked at Han Li with gazes brimming with a freezing chilliness.

“Your courage is awfully great, my Lord Husband’s last disciple!” After the time it took to make a cup of tea, Lady Yan eventually opened her mouth, her words containing a mocking intention. Everyone could clearly hear her ridicule.

“Martial Mothers, whatever you wish to know or wish to say, please say them directly. I don’t wish to hear nonsense or unnecessary words!” Han Li said with a blank face.

Han Li had clearly understood; if a wife were to bicker about how terrible she felt, and then the other wives would engage in a verbal duel. Rather than expand a great deal of effort to resolve this, he felt that he may as well get straight to the core problem. This was what he believed.

Since there were no saber lights or sword shadows belonging to hidden experts inside the room, Han Li speculated that the wives currently had no plans to dispose of him. It seemed they either had misgivings or had demands for him. Since it was like this, there was no need to be too polite. In any case, Doctor Mo’s death was an invitation for disaster; he had nothing to be ashamed of.

“You....” Although Lady Yan had much knowledge about all sorts of battles between men, the rupturing tone of Han Li’s words nearly made her speechless.

“Fine, I will ask then! Was my Lord Husband killed by your traitorous hands!?” Second Wife could not help but want to spit fire from her elegant eyes. Her scholarly air had completely vanished, leaving behind only a face of resentment.

“Second Sister!” Lady Yan wrinkled her brow and softly called her as if to prevent the Second Wife’s questions from immediately causing both parties to fall into disagreement.

‘This Lady Li is actually quite frank to directly bring the most crucial question to the table.’ Han Li inwardly sneered, thinking of this.

“It could be said that I killed him, but it could be also said that he killed himself!” Han Li said indifferently.

This sentence caused the wives sitting across from him to be shocked. They believed that Han Li would either readily deny it or simply brazenly admit it. What were they supposed to do if they could not make sense of the answer?

Second Wife Li stared blankly for a moment, but she immediately became agitated. She clearly believed that Han Li was playing with them.

“What is this nonsense? It was clearly you who harmed him.” Lady Li tremblingly retorted.

“How are you certain that I killed him? Did you see it with your own two eyes?” Han Li asked, no longer polite. He clearly understood that Doctor Mo had written that he was murdered in the letter. Naturally, they weren’t completely certain whether or not he had died by Han Li’s hand. Han Li guessed that the letter, which Doctor Mo had set aside for these wives, contained nothing but a few speculative words. As a result, Han Li could completely refute these misgivings.

“Since you’ve said this, tell us women how our Lord Husband was murdered once through. If you were truly unrelated, we won’t deliberately treat you unjustly.” The cool, elegant Fifth Wife Wang, who had been silent all along, finally spoke.

Chapter 116: Falling Out

Hearing these words, he raised his head to yawn. Then he sneered, saying, "Treat me unjustly? Those are some grand words. You think I am truly scared of your Mo Estate?"

"Were it not for the many days I had Teacher Mo for a master, imparting onto me his great medicinal expertise, and the foul reputation I would receive for bullying women... Humph! Against you, with only a single hand, I could kill this entire Mo Estate without allowing even a dog or chicken to remain!" Han Li's words chilled to the bone, his expression extremely sinister.

Han Li determined his plan. Since he was unable to cheat the Mo Estate of the precious jade, he would adopt a sinister attitude and only use unyielding methods. He planned to show a bit of his skill and have the wives know that this man was difficult to handle, forcing them to hand over the "Precious Warm Yang Jade".

When Lady Yan and company had first heard Han Li's fierce words, they all had stunned expressions. But soon after, they smiled bitterly. Third Wife Liu even bent backwards from her blossoming laughter.

It was clear that these wives were not convinced by Han Li's words. But soon, their faces were completely frozen.

That was because Han Li had extended a finger. A fireball suddenly appeared at his fingertip. When this winecup-sized fireball appeared, the entire room's temperature suddenly rose. It was as if the wives had entered a scorching summer.

Then Han Li coolly gazed toward them, as if he were trying to find a target for his Fireball Technique, in order to have these wives know he was somewhat ferocious. However, he did not expect that before Han Li made a move, Lady Li couldn't help but yell "Cultivator!" with an expression of fear.

The rest of them also turned deathly pale. Looking at the five wives with an ice-cold expression, he saw that they were emotionally moved and

looked at Han Li with gazes full of astonishment.

These women knew about the existence cultivators but were unexpectedly frightened by Han Li. Their expression appeared even more gloomy.

“You truly are a cultivator?” Third Wife Liu widely opened his beautiful eyes, asking with some doubt.

Han Li snorted. Hu La! Without saying anything further, he simply shot the fireball toward the table next to Lady Liu and reduced it to ash in the blink of an eye.

This action filled Lady Liu’s face with fright, completely whitening it. She immediately stood and recoiled several steps away from the ashes before shakily coming to a stop. Currently, if any other man saw that lovely, delicate face, they would have immediately fallen crazy for her.

Unfortunately, Han Li absolutely could not appreciate this view. He was currently staring at Lady Li, who had shouted “Cultivator!”. He asked with a cold voice, “Second Wife, how do you know of cultivators? Could it be you’ve seen other cultivators before?”

“I...” Lady Li became terrified. She was greatly fearful of Han Li’s status of a cultivator.

“Don’t ask Second Sister. I will tell you about matter regarding cultivators!” From the side, Lady Yan closed her eyes with a tired expression before interrupting Han Li’s questioning.

“Oh, then could you enlighten me?” Han Li stroked his nose, his expression somewhat relaxed.

“This isn’t something to hide. Jia Yuan City has a large population, and everyone knows of the existence of cultivators.” After Lady Yan opened her eyes, she said this with a bitter smile.

“Even some people outside the city have seen the wars between cultivators with their own eyes. It is said they could call the wind, summon the rain, and control blasts of fire. Each and every one of them is like a living Immortal.” Lady Yan said this and looked at Han Li with a

peculiar gaze.

“So it was like that!” Han Li patted the back of his head; he had unexpectedly forgotten that Jia Yuan City was not at all a small region like the Celestial Rainbow Mountains. Having cultivators appear here seemed to not be such a rare occurrence. Yesterday, did he not see that blue-clothed man!?

“Then did Teacher Mo also know the existence of cultivators?” Han Li thought of something and could not help but carelessly ask.

“Of course he knew. Lord Husband had seen the wars between cultivators with his own eyes.” Lady Yan felt that nothing good would come from hiding anything and replied without hesitation.

“Doctor Mo was quite infatuated with cultivators. So it turned out that he had previously seen a true cultivator! Unfortunately, he did not have spiritual roots and wasted his many schemes, even bringing slight benefits to myself,” Han Li thought

However, Han Li suddenly felt somewhat baffled. Why was Lady Yan currently so obedient? Whatever he asked, she sincerely replied. The slightest temperament was absent. On the mere basis that he was a cultivator, the other party had completely surrendered. Han Li found this hard to believe.

Han Li carefully observed Lady Yan’s expression and found that she had an easy, relaxed expression with some slight impatience.

‘Could it be she’s stalling for time?’ Han Li wrinkled his brow and released his spiritual awareness. There was not a sign of a single outsider intruding near the building.

Han Li looked around and suddenly stood. He walked around the room, carefully observing in every direction.

It seemed there was nothing suspicious, and the furniture in the interior of the room were quite simple. Apart from the tables and chairs, it was the same as yesterday. All except for a white candle, half melted from its burning wick.

“Candle?” Han Li’s gaze fell upon the candle. He had originally believed the white candle was lit in memory of Doctor Mo, and thus he did not mind it. But now he remembered; since they had been holding a memorial service for their Lord Husband, why did they not light any incense? This was somewhat abnormal.

Thinking of this, Han Li used his nose to carefully smell and found the air to smell like sandalwood. This fragrance was far too light. If one did not deliberately pay attention, they absolutely could not perceive this.

When Lady Yan saw Han Li look at the candle, she stood slightly less naturally. But after Han Li sniffed the air, her face greatly changed. At this moment, Han Li’s face broke into a smile that was unusually cheerful.

“What’s so funny? Even if you discovered the trick of the candle, it’s already too late. This bewitching drug can intoxicate a thousand men. When ordinary people smell this, their bones loosen and their muscles become soft, losing all power in their limbs. Even when martial artists smell this, they lose their True Qi and martial arts. Even if you’re a cultivator, you’ve already been in this room far too long to remain unaffected.” Lady Yan somewhat lost her patience and spoke those testing words.

“It’s nothing. It’s just that I feel that my luck is not bad at all!” Han Li said with a smile.

“When I was at the Seven Mysteries Sect, I have long heard of the methods employed by Jiang Hu’s Ghost Sect, including their poison. I have received an extremely deep impression of bewitching scents because I had previously suffered hardships and experienced dangers from which I couldn’t protect myself. Because even a common man could use poisons to easily kill a great expert, I long racked my brains for a solution until I finally figured out a way to protect myself from the silly methods of incapacitating drugs and poisons.” Han Li somewhat contently stated.

Lady Yan and company looked at each other in dismay. What kind of method was this? How could it be that he had still not collapsed? This

must've been true. As of currently, the ladies' complexions had already turned completely white.

“As for what method...” Seeing that the wives could not help but want to hear him spill his secrets, even tilting their ears, Han Li could not refrain from chuckling inwardly, “I don't plan on telling you because I have a habit of not revealing my secrets to my enemies!” Han Li said with a deadpan expression.

Chapter 117: Reconciliation

When these women heard Han Li's words, their complexion rapidly changed from white to red, slightly increasing their beauty.

Lady Yan was the first to calm down. She lightly straightened the jade pin in her hair bun and once again said calmly, "Even if your esteemed self is a cultivator and does not fear this bewitching scent, are you not worried about the Yin poison in your body?" Nevertheless, she used her last trump card.

The moment Han Li heard what she said, his smiling face immediately turned cold. Sure enough, Doctor Mo gave the only weapon that could be used to blackmail him to these women.

"That's right, I have the cold poison in my body. But before this poison flares up, I don't mind turning this entire residence upside down and utterly slaughtering everyone!" Han Li spoke in a flat tone, but the women clearly heard the threat within his words.

Lady Yan was silent for a while and did not open her mouth to speak. The rest of them also did not say anything. It seemed that when it came to life and death matters, the one making decisions in Mo Residence was still Fourth Wife Yan.

"Since the both of us have scruples and we are not willing to let both sides suffer, let's have a good talk." Lady Yan said cool-headedly after that moment of silence.

"Of course. I also don't plan on dying so uselessly at such a young age!" Concerning his own life, Han Li did not put up any airs. He gladly agreed to her suggestion.

Hence, he went back and sat in front of Lady Yan.

"However, before we start discussing, I, your servant, would like your esteemed self to repeat how my Lord Husband got murdered. After all, we were once husband and wife. We would only be reassured if we knew the real cause of his death. But be at ease, even if Lord Husband died by your

hands, we would not have any ulterior motives. After all we are orphans and widows, we cannot go looking for trouble and personally seek the road to death.” Lady Yan’s last sentence was spoken so desolately, making it seem as if Han Li was the kind of evil tyrant who bullied women and children.

One look at Lady Yan’s face and Han Li can’t help but have a headache. Even though he knew Lady Yan was just acting, when he saw her miserable state, he felt his heart soften a little.

Wasn’t it just telling them how Doctor Mo was murdered? There was nothing to cover up in this matter. After all, Han Li acknowledged that Doctor Mo’s death was not his fault. Instead it was Doctor Mo and Yu Zhitong who should be blamed for courting disaster.

“Alright, I can describe Teacher Mo’s death in detail. But after you all have listened and still insist on taking revenge on me, I will oblige you at anytime!” Han Li agreed to their suggestion after pondering for a while.

“Many thanks to Young Master!” When Lady Yan heard that Han Li was willing to speak the truth, her face immediately opened up and revealed a delighted look.

“This was what happened. I was deceived by Doctor Mo, after practising Eternal Spring Arts for four years, only then did I discover...”

Han Li patiently told them how he was cheated, poisoned by Doctor Mo and forced to practice the Eternal Spring Arts.

He explained that Doctor Mo had wanted to occupy his flesh body by entering his body and consuming his fundamental essence. Naturally, Yu Zhitong had then appeared and narrated the entirety of his schemes. Han Li finally discovered about his body’s Yin poison and had no choice but to come to the Lan Province and detoxify himself with the Precious Warm Yang Jade. He narrated the events the way they truly happened. Han Li wanted these wives to know that in the occurrence of Doctor Mo’s death, Han Li was the true victim. He hadn’t slighted the Mo Estate in the least.

After Lady Yan and the other wives finished hearing Han Li’s heart-shaking tale, they couldn’t help but look at one another.

If Han Li's words were true, then their Lord Husband's death was not truly Han Li's fault. In addition, hearing the methods that Doctor Mo had used and his shrewdness, they greatly matched the long-acquired impression they had of their dead husband. Furthermore, the bits of information that the hidden letter revealed didn't contradict his story in the slightest. They estimated that his story should more or less be true.

"If your esteemed self had spoken the complete truth, then our Lord Husband's death truly was not yours to blame. This was rather the fault of Yu Zhitong's ruse; otherwise how else would our Lord Husband have died?" Lady Yan lightly sighed. Her words made Han Li raise an eyebrow.

'This Lady Yan is far too favorable toward her own Lord Husband. With a few words, she easily pushed the entirety of Doctor Mo's wrongdoings onto the deceased Yu Zhitong, cleaning Doctor Mo of the blame entirely, as if he were also a victim.' Han Li stared at Lady Yan with widened eyes. Although his mouth did not say anything, his expression showed a strange emotion and made his meaning completely clear.

Lady Yan, under Han Li's attentive gaze, did not blush or jump. She only turned a blind eye.

Han Li inwardly bitterly smiled. This woman's face was quite thick, not one bit thinner than a man's! He could not help but turn his head to look at the expressions of the other wives.

Third Wife Liu still had a smiling, cheery appearance and didn't have the slightest change. When she saw Han Li looking over, she gave him several flirtatious glances, causing Han Li to remain silent.

When Second Wife Li saw Han Li looking at her, she looked ill at ease and faintly lowered her head. She certainly was worthy of being called a girl from a wealthy family, as well as educated and well balanced. It was clear she was somewhat ashamed of Lady Yan's words from a moment ago.

As for Fifth Wife Wang, although this cool, elegant young woman was expressionless, she was entirely focused on tangling her fingers together, exposing an abnormality of her heart. As for her attitude, Han Li did not

know.

“However, according to Young Master’s words just now, we have no deep animosity or hate toward one another. In that case, it would be best to conduct peace talks.” Lady Yan opened her almond lips and faintly said this.

When Han Li heard Lady Yan’s words, he turned his head and faintly stated, “What is there to discuss? Give me the Precious Warm Yang Jade, and I will turn around and leave, certain to no longer disturb the Mo Estate!”

“That is out of the question!” Lady Yan faintly smiled and immediately gave a flat decline.

“Why is it unacceptable?” Han Li said, unagitated.

“Yesterday, Young Master was outside this servant’s room and should have heard much of the vile situation the Mo Estate is in! It should be quite clear to you, sir, that without external assistance, our Mo Estate will be completely exterminated. It is only a matter of time. If it is like this, then it would better to have Young Master cleanly kill us sisters instead and have death end all troubles!” Lady Yan pitifully lamented with red eyes.

When Han Li heard this, he bafflingly stared at Lady Yan without speaking, directly looking at Lady Yan’s scarlet cheeks. However, she stubbornly continued to refuse to meet Han Li’s gaze.

Han Li let out a long sigh. He now knew where Mo Caihuan, that little demoness, learned her clever schemes; it was clearly from imitating this older demoness.

Chapter 118: Choose One

“With all this said and done, what do you all think? Be honest, I don’t want to have to beat around the bush again!” Han Li coldly said. It seemed he wasn’t influenced by Lady Yan’s act in the slightest.

Lady Yan wrinkled her brow. The youth in her presence was far more difficult than she had anticipated. Neither hard nor soft methods were effective; rather, she had no way of knowing how to deal with him.

“Could it be that you truly want us to immediately hand over our last resort and reveal our affairs to the enemy?” Lady Yan was somewhat unresigned. With the many years of handling the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association’s power, she clearly understood when to be a bit lenient and when to immediately put one entire hand on the table!

She turned her head to look at Fifth Wife Wang. Within these sisters, only Lady Wang was able to oppose her decisions. Therefore, she looked at her to see whether or not Lady Wang had a proposal.

“The matter of discussion with this person, I will leave to Fourth Sister, with whom I have no objections whatsoever!” Lady Wang saw the meaning in Lady Yan’s gaze and said, as cold as ice.

When Lady Yan heard this, she was inwardly elated and had somewhat calmed her heart.

“Very well. Since Sir does not want to beat around the bush, then we sisters will get right to the point and directly tell you the conditions.” As these words left Lady Yan’s mouth, she completely regained her bearings as the leader of one of Jia Yuan City’s three major gangs. The feeling of that delicate, powerless young married woman from before was completely obliterated. Her body dispersed the prestige of a leader.

“Good. From the beginning, I wanted to engage in talks as equals!” Han Li faintly smiled.

“So long as you exterminate the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association’s sworn enemies, the Rainbow Sect and The Hegemon’s Villa, the Mo Estate

will no longer trouble you in the future, and we will also immediately offer you the Precious Warm Yang Jade. Furthermore, we will let you choose one of our daughters, whomever you fancy, as your wife.”

“However, if you’re unyielding in your plan rob the precious jade from us, or perhaps threaten us sisters, then your esteemed self will have been mistaken. I have already handed over the precious jade to my trusted confidant; if there is the slightest sign of trouble, then it will immediately be destroyed, ending us in mutual destruction.” Lady Yan said with an imposing expression.

“Lady Yan, are you not afraid of the wind cutting your tongue!? Have me, this one person, exterminate the Rainbow Sect and the Hegemon’s Villa? You must be truly absurd for thinking of this!” Han Li seemed to have already anticipated Lady Yan’s threat and wasn’t alarmed at all.

He had already known that the Precious Warm Yang Jade could not be acquired by acting rashly. Aside from their threats, he still didn’t know how many secret recruits they harbored, and thus capturing the other party and interrogating the whereabouts of the precious jade would simply end in failure. It would be best to make the other party willingly give it to him.

“Young Master Han, are you not a cultivator? How could these people of Jiang Hu be a match against your distinguished self? In addition, we don’t want your to kill the gang in its entirety. Causing a few of their main leaders to disappear would be enough.” This time, the gorgeous young Third Wife, after giving Han Li a soul-shaking, enchanting smile, said this with her graceful voice.

“What about being a cultivator? I don’t know of other cultivators, but I do know of my own abilities with clear certainty. You can’t just foolishly send one person to confront a large gang of several thousand members. Do you all truly believe that cultivators can outrageously murder ordinary people without fear of repercussion?”

Han Li coldly glanced at Third Wife. The aweing chilliness froze her smiling expression. Under the effects of the Eternal Spring Arts and a

vigilant mind, he returned the gaze of her bewitching charming technique. How could it possibly affect him!?

“Why? Does Young Master mean that there are limitations to what cultivators can do to ordinary people?” Lady Yan asked, somewhat surprised by this revelation.

“I am not very certain of the specific details. After all, I haven’t been a cultivator for long, so I wasn’t truly in contact with these rules.” Han Li dully said. Then he looked at Lady Yan, who looked as if she wanted to say something, and waved his hand, preventing her from talking. He continued coldly, “However, if your brains aren’t lacking, it should be clear that cultivators can’t act against mortals as they desire. After all, your so-called Lan Province’s three great hegemonies and the three great gangs of Jia Yuan City still exist. They could have fallen to the schemes of unrighteous cultivators countless times. Perhaps even beautiful women like yourselves would have already become their playthings.”

Han Li final sentence was completely blunt, turning the wives’ complexions across from him to become scarlet and their eyes to show a bit of alarm.

“But this is merely Young Master’s guess. It’s not at all certain to be true!” Lady Han was still somewhat unwilling, still attempting to persuade Han Li.

“So long as there is the possibility, this person will not perform actions that would bring destruction upon himself.” Han Li fundamentally did not give Lady Yan’s fantasies the slightest leeway, and he said this without a trace of politeness.

“Don’t tell me that your venerable self plans to take our daughters’ dowry with a sleight of hand and leave us with nothing?” Lady Yan’s complexion was somewhat unsightly. She said the word ‘dowry’ with an especially heavy emphasis.

Hearing her say this, although Han Li’s expression did not change, his heart could not help but be somewhat depressed.

“The Yin poison within me was originally given to me by your Lord

Husband. Right now, I won't trouble you even if I am cured. What is there to think about?" Han Li thought somewhat hatefully.

However, Han Li knew if he were to say these words at this moment, these wives would not take it well and certainly wouldn't give him the Precious Warm Yang Jade.

As a result, Han Li gave in and muttered to himself. Then he raised his hand, cleared his throat, and said with a clear voice, "I will give you two choices. Choose whichever you fancy."

"One is to have your Mo Estate immediately pack your baggage and prepare to travel far from the Lan Province. Find a place where the power of your enemy clans cannot reach you and live as a common wealthy household. You would live the rest of your lives peacefully and completely separate yourselves from the fights between Jiang Hu's factions. This entire journey will be safe, I completely guarantee it; any forces that your enemies send to pursue you will be unable to harm you."

Han Li stopped there and looked at the change in the wives' expressions.

Apart from a slight change from Second Wife Li, Lady Yan and Third Wife Liu were completely silent. It was clear what they thought of the proposal. Han Li didn't feel the need to look at Fifth Wife Wang since it would be impossible to make out anything useful from her icy appearance.

Han Li looked at this situation and inwardly sneered several times. Lady Yan and Lady Liu were rather ambitious people. It was impossible for them to want to give up the power of the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association and live as rural village women. When he had raised this proposal, he already understood this clearly.

"And the other choice?" Third Wife Liu noticed that Han Li stopped and could not but question him.

"There is one other choice..."

Han Li left his chair and stood. He looked up to the room before slowly

telling the wives the other choice.

Chapter 119: Unexpected Information

“I could make the exception to act this once and cause the leaders of only one of the two gangs to disappear. After all, if the two hegemons were to simultaneously encounter misfortune, it would be far too easy for capable people to take note of this. The risk would increase significantly, so it isn’t worth it for me to brave this strange danger. Furthermore, apart from these two options, I will not yield in the slightest!” After Han Li said this, he hardened his face and spoke no more. He coldly waited for the wives’ reply.

After Lady Yan and the others heard Han Li’s two choices, their faces had a concealed expression of pleasant surprise. However, after they looked at each other, they still hadn’t immediately decided.

“Could your distinguished self please let us sisters talk this over for a moment? Afterwards, we will give Young Master a reply. After all, this is no small matter, we must greatly think this over!” Lady Yan prudently said.

“Of course, I am not unreasonable. But at the latest, I require an answer by tomorrow morning. The rest of today should be enough for you to discuss this over.” After Han Li said this, he no longer took notice of them and left in a relaxed manner.

Han Li climbed down the stairs and did not return to his room. Instead, he gave the burly gate guards a baffled sight as he arrogantly left the Mo Estate. After he determined there was no one following him, Han Li returned to the inn he where stayed at initially.

As he entered the inn, Sun Ergou hurriedly welcomed him.

“If there is anything to say, say it in my room!” Without waiting for Sun Ergou to start speaking, Han Li indifferently commanded him.

“Yes, Esteemed Young Master!” Sun Ergou respectfully followed behind Han Li.

Entering the room, Han Li sat on the couch and stretched himself before

saying indifferently, “Seeing your urgent appearance, it seems you have something important to tell me?”

“Young Master, there has been an extraordinary event. I must report it to you, sir.” Sun Ergou mysteriously replied, unintentionally advancing half a step

“If there is something to say, then say it. Don’t be nervous.” Han Li looked at Sun Ergou with a tilted glance.

“Hehe! This humble person isn’t feigning mystery. A rather unexpected event has occurred. This humble person obtained the exact information to present to Young Master. Recently, a large number of Immortals have gathered in Jia Yuan City to meet together in some sort of “Great Immortal Assembly”. I’ve heard that so long as you can participate in this meeting, even common folk can immediately become an Immortal as a member of an Immortal clan.” Sun Ergou said, his saliva splashing around.

“Immortals?” Han Li was slightly surprised.

“That’s right, there have been people that have seen them with their own eyes. Immortals that can soar the skies, harness the mist and even expel lightning or shoot flames. Young Master, what do you say? If one does not have any luck, how could they possibly see an Immortal as they please?” Sun Ergou asked somewhat enviously. Seeing his appearance, it seemed he had completely replaced himself with a person who couldn’t wait to see an Immortal.

Han Li had already stopped listening at this point. What Sun Ergou called Immortals were actually cultivators. However, how did a gangster find out about the meeting of cultivators? Han Li was somewhat shocked.

“How do you know of this? Do you know the much about the person who gave you this information?” Han Li asked with interest.

“This information is completely reliable. It is what my gang brothers have told me. However, because my gang leader is afraid of Immortals, he ordered us to seal our lips. Only the upper division of the Fourth Level Gang knows this information. I have also obtained similar information

from a drunken noble. I imagine that Young Master, being such an expert, would be interested. As a result, I hastily rushed over and waited until Young Master had returned.” Sun Ergou said, eager to take credit for his information.

“Oh! I will not forget your hard effort! However, first specifically explain how those in your gang evaded the notice of those Immortals after learning this information?” Han Li earnestly investigated in detail. This related to the reliability of the information; therefore, Han Li didn’t dare to be careless.

“I also heard that drunk noble said it was like this...” Sun Ergou didn’t dare to speak false words and honestly informed Han Li.

“Originally, the news from the within the gang came from a small gang leader of the Fourth Level Gang. Several days ago, he was conducting a large business transaction in the west city outskirts, but who would have thought the information was incorrect? The other party was far too greedy and had planned to kill everyone before escaping with the wind.

“In order to escape pursuit, he hid in a tree hole in the nearby woods. But unexpectedly, although the enemy had not found him, an incomparably large, monstrous eagle suddenly fell from the sky. That eagle’s frightening appearance scared the gang member stiff.

“This man was quick-witted in the moment of crisis and suddenly thought to use the widely-spread Jiang Hu ‘Turtle Breath Art’. He used it on himself to reduce his breath and heartbeat to the extreme, thereby entering a state of feigned death and evading the eagle’s notice.

“Just as he was about to lose consciousness, he heard a dialogue from a young couple on the eagle’s back. There were actually people on the eagle’s back! However, because the eagle was so large and the man was panicked, he had not noticed the people on it earlier.

“Just like that, he faintly heard about the Great Immortal Assembly. At that time, he also realised the young male-female couple were Immortals, but his Turtle Breath Art ran out of time, causing him to lose consciousness.

“By the time he had awakened, it was already the morning of the next day. The couple and the monstrous eagle had long departed without a trace. Thus, with no better option, he stamped his feet and beat his chest before returning crestfallen to the gang .

“The moment he returned, he was immediately yelled at, so he could not help but tell his superior of this. When his superior heard this, he didn’t dare to cover it up and reported it to our gang leader, ‘Ape Armed’ Shen Zhongshan, who gave the command to seal our lips.”

After Han Li finished hearing Sun Ergou’s story, although his face did not change, his heart stirred uncontrollably.

A great many cultivators were meeting together! This was a golden opportunity that only occurred once every hundred years. If he could join, he would be able to come into contact with the world of cultivators, and he would no longer have to grope in the dark as he was doing now, arbitrarily trying to find the path of cultivation.

Han Li strongly suppressed the excitement in his heart and thought for a moment. With a profoundly calm head, he asked, “Did that person hear the Immortal couple say where they were holding the gathering of Immortals?”

Chapter 120: Scheming to Seize a Gang

“He did not mention the time, but from the way he spoke, it appears that it’s going to be not too long from now. As for the meeting place, it seems like it was not mentioned.” Sun Ergou said as he scratched his head, somewhat embarrassed.

Han Li frowned. Apparently, the information that Sun Ergou possessed was not one hundred percent accurate. There were definitely some aspects that were overlooked.

Han Li bowed his head and pondered for a while. Suddenly, he had an epiphany and thought of a brilliant idea.

He cautiously gave Sun Ergou a once-over, then abruptly smiled and said, “Sun Ergou, I’m very pleased with the way you handle affairs recently, especially the major contribution you’ve made with the latest information. As a result, I am prepared to reward you heavily!”

When Sun Ergou heard this, he was so elated that his face brightened up subconsciously.

Sun Ergou never would have thought that a few pieces of information would merit the appreciation of this esteemed Young Master and lead to a reward. It seemed that handling affairs for this person was truly refreshing. Although he didn’t know why Han Li would reward him so handsomely, Han Li wouldn’t give him a large amount of gold and silver treasure, would he?

Sun Ergou couldn’t help but let his imagination run wild.

“Do you have any interest in becoming the Gang Leader of the Fourth Level Gang?” Han Li’s question was so earth-shattering that Sun Ergou’s surprised face changed so drastically, and he nearly jumped out of his skin.

“Young Master must be joking and teasing this servant! This servant has little ability and character, how could I qualify to be a Gang Leader?!” Sun Ergou muttered sullenly.

“Why not? With me supporting you from behind, even a small group like Fourth Level Gang would be easy to obtain! Or are you willing to just be a minor gang leader and take care of the harbor for the rest of your life?” Han Li said cajolingly as he laughed softly.

When Sun Ergou heard this, many expressions crossed his face. There was surprise, fear and mostly excitement.

As a man, who would not imagine himself being surrounded by beauties one day? Having all the authority in his hands and being able to control someone’s life or death...what a marvelous idea!

Buried at the bottom of his heart, Sun Ergou’s innermost ambition was lightly ignited by Han Li’s few words. But Sun Ergou still had a few qualms and thus did not immediately agree with Han Li.

“The martial arts of our Gang Leader and the three great Protectors is certainly not weak. Can Young Master be certain that he can subdue them?” Sun Ergou asked tentatively in a low voice.

“Subdue them? Haha, what’s the use of that? Just kill them all!” Han Li said coldly as he regarded them with little importance.

Sun Ergou couldn’t help but to shudder when he heard this. This Young Master’s killing intent was truly too great! If he did not agree, Sun Ergou was afraid that he might be dealt with immediately.

“Since Young Master speaks highly of this servant, this servant’s life is bound to Young Master. I will listen to and obey your every command.” Under Han Li’s coercion and persuasion, Sun Ergou was finally willing to take some risks.

“Good, this is how it should be!” Han Li nodded his head in satisfaction.

“Give me your Gang Leader’s most recent movements.” Han Li asked willfully.

“There is one that is noteworthy. Recently, he has been going to the Eastern City’s most popular brothel, the Clear River Brothel, every afternoon. He has been entranced by the leading girl, Xiao Jinzhi. However, the three great Protectors would also accompany him, so I’m

afraid it might be a bit hard to deal with. Why not wait for a few more days and find a better opportunity?” Since Sun Ergou had already agreed with Han Li, he would immediately do everything he could for sake of his life and glory.

“No need. Since we already know the time and place, taking their small lives will be very easy.” Han Li mentioned causally.

“But once they die, you’re afraid you won’t have the capability to take over Fourth Level Gang, correct?”

“Yes. Within the gang, this servant is only a minor leader. There are many other who have higher ranks and better qualifications than me” Sun Ergou said shamefully.

“Don’t worry, if I said I’d make you the Gang Leader of the Fourth Level Gang, you’ll definitely be the Gang Leader. I will temporarily dispatch Crooked Soul to watch over you. He can get rid of all those they rebel against you and be your personal guard for the time being.” Han Li declared confidently.

Afterwards, Han Li rushed to the room next door and knocked calmly three times. A short moment later, Crooked Soul appeared in front of them.

“Keep this close to you and conceal it well. As long as you have this object on you, Crooked Soul will obey all your orders. He will get rid of your enemies and help you ascend to the position of Gang Leader.”

Han Li took out the Soul Luring watch from his bosom. He caressed it softly for a while, then handed it over to Sun Ergou.

Although the person holding Soul Luring Watch was not the master of Crooked Soul, he could still command Crooked Soul. This was another method of control on Crooked Soul that Doctor Mo taught Han Li. Furthermore, if the former owner dripped his blood essence onto the Soul Luring Watch, other people would not be able to tamper with it. Hence, Han Li was not afraid that Sun Ergou might have evil plans or other intentions.

Sun Ergou had personally seen Crooked Soul's display of his mighty power, so he was especially surprised to receive the watch, increasing his courage drastically.

"Many thanks to Young Master's great kindness. This servant will definitely repay this favor with my life!" But Sun Ergou was very clever. He knew that despite being the Gang Leader of the Fourth Level Gang, he was actually just this Young Master's puppet. Thus, whenever there was an opportunity, he would fervently express his loyalty.

"Head back and prepare first then! Once that Gang Leader is dead, you should take advantage of the confusion and assume control of Fourth Level Gang. But you must remember this: send me the fellow who saw the Immortal couple. I want him unharmed as I have things to ask him. Did you get that?" Han Li's last sentences were very strict, clearly attaching great importance to this task.

"Please be at ease, Young Master. This servant will definitely send him to you in one piece. I will absolutely not disappoint Young Master!" Sun Ergou immediately patted his chest and vowed with devotion written on his face.

"As long as you understand, then that's good. Bring Crooked Soul along with you then. The next time you see me, you will already be the Gang Leader!" Han Li told him without batting an eye.

"This servant will retire now!" Sun Ergou noted Han Li's notice to leave and tactfully retreated out of the house with great speed. Crooked Soul followed closely behind.

The moment Sun Ergou left the house, Han Li stood up. Within the house, Han Li turned in a semicircle and suddenly let out a prolonged mellow whistle. Then, from the outside, the Cloud-Winged Bird dived in and landed on Han Li's shoulder.

Han Li extracted a bottle from his bosom and pour out Cloud-Winged Bird's favorite Yellow Chestnut Pill, which he gently fed to the bird. Then he softly said, "Little fellow, catch up with the person who just left the house. If he leaves the city walls to escape, immediately return and tell

me.”

When the Cloud-Winged Bird finished listening to Han Li’s words, it chirped intelligently and proceeded to fly out of the window, disappearing into the sky.

Chapter 121: Clear River Brothel

Shen Zhongshan's current mood was quite good. He was currently sitting in a private room of the Clear River Brothel and embracing an exceptionally beautiful girl, using his large hands to grope her delicate body in a vulgar manner.

Maybe it was due to Shen Zhongshan's impatience, but his handling caused the gorgeously enchanting maiden to giggle nonstop.

"Miss Jin, I think you should just submit to our Gang Leader already! This is the first time our Gang Leader has been so infatuated with a woman. He came here in such a hurry even though the gang's affairs have not been completely dealt with." The person who said this was a dark fatty who wore loose-fitting gray garments. His waist was as large as a bucket, and his legs were twice the size a normal person's. After speaking, he was somewhat gasping for breath.

"That's right, Miss Jinzhi! Our Gang Leader has visited your establishment every afternoon for five days in a row and spent a large sum of money! Furthermore, you profited quite a bit. You only let our Gang Leader embrace you for a while and never let him spend the night with you even once. This just doesn't make any sense!" The one who spoke this time was a middle aged scholar with a mole on his face. His eyes exuded a hidden fierceness, making him seem like a scheming person.

Currently, besides Shen Zhongshan, there were three other people in the room. They were none other than Fourth Level Gang's three Great Protectors.

The dark fatty was "Mad Fist" Qian Jing. Disregarding his oddly plump size, he was actually extremely proficient in the "Berserk Eighteen Strike" and had killed many reputable experts.

The Confusian scholar was "Malicious Scholar" Fan Ju. Even though he practiced a very swift and fierce "Snow Wind" sword technique, what made his name famous worldwide was his dark heart, fierce methods, and

sinister intentions.

Standing at one side was a dark-clothed person who had not spoken a word since the start. He was the strongest out of the three Great Protectors, “Throwing Dagger” Shen San. His unique skill of sending out eighteen throwing daggers in succession had previously helped Shen Zhongshan get rid of many experts who pursued a vendetta against him. In addition, Shen San was also Shen Zhongshan’s distant relative. Thus, he was the one Shen Zhongshan regarded the most highly in the Fourth Level Gang.

Just like Shen Zhongshan, each of the three Protectors had a pretty girl sitting in their embrace. But these girls were nothing like the girl in Shen Zhongshan’s embrace. She was delicate, charming, flirtatious and finely developed in figure.

At this moment, when the giggling little Jinzhi heard “Mad Fist” and “Malicious Scholar” Fan Ju’s words, her eyes immediately began to tear up, as if a teardrop might fall at any moment.

“When Master Fan and Master Qian speak like this, you are wrongly accusing Jinzhi. The moment others see Master Shen, they would immediately know that he is a hero! To be able to fly together and nest together with Master Shen, that is all that Jinzhi wishes for!”

“However, both of you also know that my body belongs to Clear River Brothel. Without the brothel’s Elderly Lady Wang’s approval, if Jinzhi were to leave and receive patrons without permission, I will be beaten to death. Why doesn’t Master Shen go and ask Elderly Lady Wang? If she agrees to let Jinzhi receive patrons, then I will definitely wait upon Master Shen diligently tonight.” The lead prostitute of the Clear River Brothel spoke in a sincere tone of sweet reasonableness and looked at Shen Zhongshan with extreme adoration.

Her words seemed quite believable yet fake at the same time, making Qian Jin and Fan Ju look at each other speechlessly in dismay.

Of course they had asked for the price of spending the night with little Jinzhi. Using the excuse of little Jinzhi having never spent the night with

a patron before, Elderly Lady Wang demanded an exorbitant price that made Gang Leader Shen Zhongshan's heart skip a beat. Thus, they had never reached an agreement.

It was even more impossible to use force to negotiate. The Clear River Brothel was the property of Jia Yuan City's third largest gang, the Heavenly Tyrant Sect.

After hitting a snag with this giant red card, Qian Jin and Fan Ju could only vent their frustration on the Clear River Brothel's girls who were in their arms. Only after groping them ferociously did they let the matter drop.

"Hehe, many thanks to the two worthy little brothers for being concern about my affairs. But don't worry, two days ago I made a great business deal. This small amount of money isn't too much. On the contrary, you, beautiful lady, cannot go back on your words! You must properly wait upon this Lord Master when the time comes!" The lustful Shen Zhongshan said contentedly as he suddenly turned towards little Jinzhi, who was in his embrace, and nibbled her fragrant cheek.

Shen Zhongshan was a huge man with very hairy arms and chest. His two arms were much longer than that of an average human. Thus, his whole person looked like a beast wearing clothes, truly so ugly that he could frighten people.

A few years ago, this extremely boorish man used "Open Arm Punch", a skill that he mastered to perfection, to kill the Fourth Level Gang's predecessor, Gou Tianpo, and his trusted aides, the four great Warlords, thereby seizing the position as Gang Leader. Therefore, in the entire Jia Yuan City, he was definitely a part of the top ranking experts and must not be underestimated.

"Master Shen", Little Jinzhi appeared very bashful when Shen Zhongshan sneakily bit her cheek and behaved like a spoiled child in his arms, making Shen Zhongshan quite pleased with himself as he laughed heartily.

Dong dong! Dong dong! Right in that moment, someone knocked on the

door.

“Who is it?” The dark fatty, “Mad Fist” Qian Jin was unhappy and shouted out the question in a bad mood.

“I am here to deliver beverages to the gentlemen in the room.” The voice of a youthful male came through from the outside.

“Then why are you taking so slow to deliver? I’ve already complained that there are not enough drinks!” The dark fatty spoke without thinking when he heard the reply.

In the wake of Qian Jin’s words, a young man wearing servant clothes came in. The ordinary-looking youth was holding a tray with both hands. There were several dishes and two bottles of alcohol on the tray.

“Quickly bring the alcohol here. I want to see how it tastes like!” Fatty Qian Jin was a typical drunkard. Thus his eyes immediately brightened up and he clamoured incessantly when he saw the two bottles of alcohol.

“Yes, this servant will carry it to you!” This person, with an appearance of a young servant, walked forward a few steps and placed a wine cup on the table.

The moment the fatty saw the wine cup, he immediately grabbed it in his hand and wanted to down it to taste its flavour.

“Wait, fatty!” The quiet black-clothed person, Shen San, suddenly stopped Qian Jin from pouring the alcohol into his mouth.

Chapter 122: Kill by Poison

“What’s going on?” Qian Jin asked, baffled by Shen San’s warning. Due to his continuous trust in Shen San, he unconsciously stopped himself from drinking the alcohol.

“The one who originally served the food wasn’t you but was someone else?” Shen San did not pay notice of the fatty’s misgivings but instead kept his hand on the saber at his waist and slowly stood. He coldly asked at starrng young servant with the wine.

“Because there are too many guests, Li Er went to another room to run some errands. I am his replacement. Uncle, what’s wrong?” This young servant was looking attentively at Shen San. His complexion turned completely white after a moment as he replied, completely fearful.

Seeing this person’s expression, Shen San’s expression had somewhat relaxed; however he still seemed ill at ease. He turned his head to the little Jin embraced by Shen Zhongshan and asked, “Miss Jin, do you know this person? Is he truly a person from your Clear River Brothel?”

“This...?” This amazing beauty showed an expression of embarrassment, but still somewhat awkwardly said, “I won’t conceal this from you, Grandpa Shen, This person does seem really unfamiliar, however, our Clear River Brothel contains over several hundred people. For this woman, having not seen someone before is not such a strange matter.”

“Haha! Little San, aren’t you bothering Miss Jin? How could such a delicately sweet beauty recognize everyone beneath her? Could it be you believe that this person infiltrated this establishment as an assassin?” Shen Zhongshan unconcernedly asked as he lowered his head onto the attractive woman at his side and took a few strong whiffs.

“Boss, we make our livings on the blade’s edge. It would be to our utmost advantage to be careful!” Shen San face was expressionless and he sent a rigid look at the youth delivering the plate.

“Hehe! This person’s footsteps are careless, and his eyes have no spirit. With a single look, you can tell he is no martial artist. If you still don’t

feel at ease, I still have a method that will identify his authenticity.” The Malicious Scholar Fan Ju coldly laughed several times and darkly stated.

Ever since he entered the Fourth Level Gang, he had long been dissatisfied with the trust Shen Zhongshan placed in Shen San as well as the claim that Shen San deserved the title of the Fourth Level Gang’s brains. He decided to disgrace Shen San rather nicely.

“Oh, what kind of method? My old pal Fan, don’t hesitate to test it out.” Although Shen Zhongshan had said this with a very heroic appearance, he actually cherished his small life rather greatly. As a result, he immediately withdrew his previous remark and approved Fan Ju’s examination.

“Since this person doesn’t know martial arts, if he truly wanted to harm us, he would have simply tampered with our food and drink. So let’s have him try it out and have the truth come to light!” The Malicious Scholar said with a card up his sleeve.

“Brother Fan, good plan! Boy, first drink some of this wine for uncle and eat some of the food too. If you have the slightest hesitation, uncle will immediately wring your head.” The dark fatty Qian Jin applauded happily and then loudly berated the young servant.

When the black-clothed man, Shen San, heard Fan Ju’s words, he truly felt that this method was truly not bad and did not speak any words of opposition. He coldly looked on as a bystander.

As for that Shen Zhongshan and little Jinzhi in his bosom, they also had no complaints.

Consequently, the young servant that delivered the wine and food, with a sullen face, drank a cup of wine and ate a few mouthfuls of food.

Seeing this person come out unscathed after eating the food and drinking the wine, Fan Ju complacently smiled and said to Shen San with great emphasis, “It seems my boy, Shen, was overly cautious. This person is truly just a servant. Next time, by all means, don’t sweep everyone’s wine again.” With this said, he threw several spoons of food into his mouth and slowly chewed.

“Humph!” Shen San snorted, not at all paying attention to Fan Ju’s oblique accusation but instead sat back down with a relaxed body.

“Haha! It’s not important! It was just a misunderstand.” Shen Zhongshan naturally knew that his two subordinates did not get along well. However, this was what he had wanted to see. As a result, he feigned an outspoken laughing smile.

“Since this was a misunderstanding, this young servant can leave now. This silver can be regarded as a gift to you!” Shen Zhongshan felt around for two taels’ worth of silver and tossed it towards the young servant.

“Thank you, uncle. Since I have no other business here, this servant will ask to be excused!” The youth, dressed as a young servant, saw the silver with delight and withdrew in high spirits, closing the room’s door as he left.

“Aiya! Uncle Shen is truly generous. In the future you can’t be stingy toward Jinzhi either!” Little Jinzhi’s sweet, coquettish voice spread throughout the room.

“Of course, beautiful. You are uncle’s dearest treasure! So long as you serve this uncle well, he definitely won’t treat you unfairly! Come brothers! Let us all drink a cup! We won’t be returning sober!” Shen Zhongshan’s broken, harsh voice spread outside the room, where the youth could clear everything clearly.

The youth outside the room suddenly sneered. He did not immediately leave but rather secretly eavesdropped in the vicinity, standing there like a ghost. He was motionless, as if he were waiting for something.

After the time it took to make a cup of tea, frightened yelling abruptly came from within the room, “Poison! The food and drinks are laced with poison! I’ve been poisoned!” Just after he said this, the man strangely laughed two times before his breath halted. It appeared that this voice belonged to the dark fatty, Qian Jing.

(TL:The time it takes to make a cup of tea: 5 minutes)

“Slut! You actually conspired to murder the gang leader! I want your

life!” Shen Zhongshan roared with startling anger. However it appeared to be too late, and after involuntarily letting out two hollow laughs, he actually fell to the ground, dead.

“Poison Expert” Fan Ji and Shen San fearfully looked at each other and spoke in unison, “That young servant poisoned us!”

“That young servant must surely have the antidote!”

The two men immediately pushed the women in their embrace away and dashed out the door as if their buttocks were on fire.

Unfortunately, just as they left the door, they let out a “Haha” before slowly falling to the ground.

“It seems that the dark fatty drank the most and therefore was the first to have the toxin take effect! That Shen Zhongshan must have also drank quite a bit and was the second. As for the black clothed person and the scholar, although they did not drink much, the toxicity of my ‘Laughing Soul Powder’ is fierce. So long as a single drop is consumed, death will be certain, without a doubt.” The youth leisurely thought. Afterwards, he waited for a moment before opening the door and entering the room.

Taking a single look within the room, he saw that not a single life had remained. Even little Jinzhi and the other three women drank a cup and had long since taken their dying breath.

After Han Li looked once through and confirmed for certain that that none were still alive, did he swiftly leave the doom.

“Once the news that Shen Zhongshan succumbed to poison spreads, people will surely believe that he was killed by his enemies of Jiang Hu. It shouldn’t provoke any greatly troublesome people.” Han Li thought as he relaxed himself on the way back.

“This Pure Spirit Powder is truly effective. So long as I take a dose in advance, not only can I protect myself against all kinds of poisons, but I can also protect myself against bewitching scents and other odd drugs. Last time, I used it against Lady Yan and the other wives, much to my amusement.” He smiled somewhat oddly and could not help but grope the

inside of his bosom.

On the way back to the tavern, Han Li saw no one noteworthy. He then entered his room and lied down on his bed, soundly sleeping.

This was a habit Han Li unintentionally acquired. So long as he finished some great matter, he was particularly fond of lying down and falling fast asleep, properly loosening the exhaustion of his body and mind.

As Han Li slept soundly, the deaths of Shen Zhongshan and his three great Protectors had been discovered by the Clear River Brothel. As a result, when the news spread throughout the Fourth Level Gang, there was much uproar caused by many ambitious people.

No one had thought to investigate Shen Zhongshan's death, because in Jia Yuan City, the strong preying on the weak was the law of the land. Shen Zhongshan had also climbed to his position after murdering the previous Fourth Level Gang's leader. Consequently, the remaining leaders of the Fourth Level Gang only cared about who was going to fill the vacancy left by the previous gang leader's death.

As a result, incompetent candidates and those who remained unconvinced all competed in a fiery melee for the position of Gang Leader. Eventually for the Fourth Level Gang, this broke out during the same evening.

The morning of the next day, the outcome was shockingly discovered by common gang members of the lowest gangs, those who had never taken part in the melee; in the entire Fourth Level Gang, the one left standing was unexpectedly Sun Ergou, who could barely lift his eyes from exhaustion.

Last night, this Sun Ergou had actually killed the rest of his senior opposition. Once no one dared to stand in opposition against him, he smoothly ascended to the position of Fourth Level Gang's Gang Leader. Furthermore, the other gangs in the western city district were given notice, confirming his succession.

After Han Li, the one that plotted this behind the scenes, rose from a comfortable sleep, he showed up in the Mo Estate at the small and rather

unique building. He was facing the still-standing Lady Yan and several other beautiful women. However, behind them were the three great beauties of Jia Yuan City—Teacher Mo's three tender daughters.

Han Li had seen Mo Yuzhu and Mo Caihuan before, and thus his gaze was mostly focused on Doctor Mo's adopted daughter, Mo Fengwu.

Wearing a yellow jacket, Mo Fengwu had a face shaped like a goose egg. It seemed she was sixteen to seventeen years of age, and her entirety was filled with an extraordinary gracefulness, giving Han Li the impression of a dainty spirit.

At this time, because Han Li was attentively watching Mo Fengwu, she had somewhat shyly lowered her head, revealing an exquisitely slender, snow-white neck. Upon seeing this, Han Li could not help but secretly swallow his saliva several times.

"Young Master Han, refrain from looking at my clan's Fengwu with such a lustful gaze! Our Fengwu's face is quite thin! Are we not going to continue yesterday's topic?" After the Third Wife smiled bewitchingly, she said these words to Han Li with her charming voice.

Chapter 123: Business Deal

“Topic? What topic? I came here asking for your final decision! Do you want to depart from here and live in secrecy? Or would you rather have me dispose of one of your great adversaries?” After Han Li withdrew his gaze from the yellow jacketed beauty, he straightened his face and said this, not polite in the least.

After Lady Yan heard Han Li’s words, she wrinkled her brow and slowly said this to Han Li, “Young Master Han, don’t be in such a hurry! After we sisters thoroughly thought this through yesterday, we had decided to choose the second option. However we wish to change the terms a bit.”

“I already emphasized that I do not wish to haggle with the several madams over the terms. This matter cannot be changed. Either agree to my conditions or choose one of the two choices.” Han Li said, suddenly showing displeasure.

“Young Master, what do you think about my daughters’ looks?” Lady Yan did not take notice of Han Li’s displeasure and unexpectedly turned the conversation toward the three Mo sisters.

“National grace with the scent of divinity. To praise the innate beauty of these women with these words would not be excessive!” Han Li was surprised but immediately replied with a light smile. He somewhat vaguely understood Lady Yan’s plan.

(TL: “Outstanding beauty”: 国色天香, national grace, divine fragrance)

“Our request is well within reason. So long as your distinguished self can eliminate the heads of the Rainbow Sect and the Hegemon’s Villa, not only will we give you the Precious Warm Yang Jade for detoxification, but you can also take all three sisters as your wives and concubines. Were you not looking at Fengwu just a moment ago? So long as you agree, she could be of your Han clan!” Lady Yan earnestly said, pointing behind her to Mo Yuzhu and the ther daughters.

“Fourth Mother!”

“Mother!”

Mo Yuzhu and Mo Caihuan’s expressions greatly changed, and they could not help but cry out. It was clear that these two had not been informed of this and were frightened pale by Lady Yan’s rash promise.

Apart from Lady Yan’s complexion turning slightly pale, she had still kept her calm.

It was no surprise that they were so alarmed. Han Li’s appearance was truly not astonishing at all, and he was a world of difference away from the two’s image of their ideal husband. They didn’t share a single common trait with him. How could they be willing to marry themselves to Han Li?

“Stop talking! This is a matter that I and your mothers have already decided upon. If you do not comply, you will be expelled from the Mo Estate.” Lady Yan said with a cold voice as she lowered her face.

Hearing these words being uttered, the three Mo sisters were all stunned.

Mo Yuzhu slightly bit her almond lips as her complexion ashened. The dazed Mo Caihuan gazed toward her Second Mother and Fifth Mother, both of whom usually loved her the most dearly, while begging with her eyes. Only Mo Fengwu was somewhat better, but her body had lightly trembled. She motionlessly leaned against the wall.

“There is no need to threaten the young ladies! I cannot agree to your conditions. It’s like how that old saying goes: ‘no matter the circumstances, I will not brave pointless hazards’. I quite cherish my little life!” After a moment of silent, Han Li replied with a lowered voice, flatly rejecting Lady Yan’s proposal.

As for Han Li, to say that his heart was not move when facing the three beautiful Mo Sisters would be a completely false statement. However, Han Li had already carefully considered that if he were to kill the other two hegemon of the Lan Province, it would surely provoke the notice of someone observant and cause life-threatening disaster to descend upon him.

Just by thinking about it, after the Rainbow Sect and the Sole Hegemon's Villa's collapse, Lady Yan was certain to bring the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association to great power and become the greatest beneficiary.

In addition, with the abrupt appearance of a stranger in the Mo Estate suddenly taking Mo's three tender beauties as his wives, it would undoubtedly imply that he was this matter's greatest contributor as well as the killer!

If this were to provoke some mysterious force that watched over cultivators, then nothing good would happen to this dabbler in cultivation. It was more than likely that he would not be able to keep his little life. In that case, what use would there be for the exquisite, ravishing, dainty beauty of these three Mo Sisters?

As a result, Han Li inwardly gave himself a bitter smile and shoved the appearance and fragrance of the three great beauties to the side.

As for whether the Mo sisters were fond of him or not, Han Li could not care less. So long as he obtained these beautiful women, then acquiring their hearts was only a matter of time! However, to say this at this moment was already useless. If Han Li's previous words had scalded the hands of the three Mo sisters like a sweet potato, that absolutely didn't trouble him at all! He currently planned to dissolve the cold Yin poison from his body as soon as possible and then depart from this quarrelsome place. As for whether the Mo Estate would later acquire disaster or fortune, that had nothing to do with him.

Han Li spoke of his rejection. Although the faces of Lady Yan and the other wives weren't good, the Mo sisters have grown a rather favorable impression of him. Even the youngest, Mo Caihuan, smiled through her fake tears that created a devil's mask with which she disguised herself in front of Han Li.

In addition, even Mo Yuzhu's and Mo Fengwu's impression of Han Li had softened considerably, causing them to view him in a new light.

Lady Yan sighed. The rest looked at each other with meaningful

glances, and then turned their bodies. Helpless, Lady Yan said, "Since Young Master Han hasn't changed his mind, then we will leave the matter alone! We will reach a deal according to Young Master's conditions. So long as Young Master Han can kill the Hegemon's Villa Sovereign, "Furious Lion" Ouyang Feitian, we will hand over the Precious Warm Yang Jade that will let your distinguished self be detoxified."

"Hehe! You women are quite good at scheming! I heard this Ouyang Feitian is at the prime of his life and has yet to have children. The Hegemon's Villa will almost certainly collapse immediately after his death. Its subordinates would be in complete disarray, too busy to worry about the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association." Han Li stroked his nose, softly laughing.

When Lady Yan heard Han Li's words, she gave Han Li a cold glance.

"It is not as you say. Do you know who it was that sent Wu Jianming here? It was by the order of this Sovereign Ouyang. In addition, Wu Jianming is Ouyang Feitian's seventh disciple, and is extremely doted upon.

"The Sovereign of Hegemon's Villa was of the same generation as our Lord Husband and is of nearly the same age. From the beginning, he has been ambitiously wanting to proclaim himself Sovereign of the entire Lan Province, and thus he employed the tactics 'first weak then strong', striving to first consume the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association and then deal with the Rainbow Sect. "

"Several years ago, he instigated my Lord Husband's sword little brother Ma Kongtian and my Lord Husband's second disciple, Zhao Kun, to attempt to split the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association. In the end, it was seen through by us sisters, and we killed those two and their accomplices in advance. However, the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association's strength had been greatly damaged. We had to retreat step by step under the pressure from the Hegemon's Villa's advancing army. As a result, we had no choice but to pull back our men and entrench ourselves in Jia Yuan City."

Lady Yan softly spoke of a few of the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association's secrets.

"However, your current influence in Jia Yuan City seems to not amount to much either. Couldn't the Hegemon's Villa just exterminate you in a single vigorous attempt?" Han Li thought for a moment and asked, slightly puzzled.

"Heehee! Ouyang Feitian, that madman, doesn't dare to attack here. Naturally, he has his reasons. If you want to, so long as you agree to our sister's original conditions, I will tell Young Master." Third Wife Liu giggled, telling half-truths with her alluring voice.

"Hehe! Let's forget about it then. I was just a bit curious!" Han Li remained completely calm and collected.

"Really! Not a single bit masculine, without even the slightest intention of bringing out a bit more force!" Third Wife Liu said with her small mouth, as if teasing Han Li.

Lady Yan and the others turned a blind eye to the Third Wife's actions; however, the three Mo sister's faces had turned red. After all, their own elder had teased the man they were originally about to marry right in front of his face. Outrageous!

Mo Caihuan pouted and firmly glared at Han Li.

However, Han Li seemed to not notice this in the least, as if he were in his own world. Instead, he replied, "Third Martial Mother speaks of this quite lightly. Since a bit of force could cost me my own life, I'm fine with not being a masculine man! I'm fine so long as I am a man!"

Perhaps Han Li's last sentence was a bit too frank, because not only did it stun Third Wife Liu, who pursed the lips of her enchanting smile, it also annoyed Second Wife Li and Lady Yan.

"Young Master, how do you plan to take Ouyang Feitian's life? This person spends his days hiding deeply within the villa and rarely leaves. Not only is he at the pinnacle of martial arts, his shrewdness is outstanding. He is quite a difficult opponent to deal with." Lady Yan

firmly said with a stiff complexion.

“Lady Fourth shouldn’t worry about that. You just have to prepare me a good horse and a portrait of this person. Then I will make him disappear from this world.”

“I hope so!” Lady Yan softly spoke.

“Back to the previous topic...shouldn’t you give me a guarantee that when I return from my completed task, you women will not become hostile and refuse to acknowledge your debt!?” Han Li intoned, soft as a feather.

“What kind of guarantee does your distinguished self want?” Lady Yan didn’t show any discontent but rather seemed to have already anticipate this demand.

“Inside this bottle, there is a medicine pill. I must ask everyone to take this poison, but I will not say what it is. In any case, wait for day I come back after killing Ouyang to exchange the antidote for the Precious Warm Yang Jade.” Han Li felt around for a porcelain bottle before setting it on the table and coldly staring at Lady Yan and her family members.

(TL: In Chinese the word of medicine “药” also means poison.)

Lady Yan did not say anything further and extended her fine lily-white hands to grab the bottle. She poured out a jade green pill and looked to Lady Li and the others before tilting her head up and swallowing it.

“Good courage! Good decisiveness! You are truly worthy of leading the Fearsome Flood Dragon Association.” Han Li could not help but give praise. His gaze then moved toward the rest of the women.

Chapter 124: Fengwu

“My sisters do not need to take the poison! Is my life not enough as collateral?” Lady Yan, who previously swallowed the pill, prevented Second Wife Li from taking the poison.

When Han Li heard Lady Yan’s words, he was slightly stunned, exposing an appearance of surprise.

After he immediately muttered to himself, he slightly nodded his head and said, “Since Fourth Martial Mother feels so deeply for her sisters, I, Han Li, will not be an unreasonable person! Fine, Second Martial Mother and the rest do not need to take the poison.”

After Han Li said this, he took the bottle from Lady Yan’s hands and stored it in his bosom.

“Since this affair has been concluded, I will first take my leave. Tomorrow at this time, I will come back to the Mo Estate for the portrait and other necessary items, then I will directly head to the Hegemon’s Villa.”

“Thank you for your troubles, Young Master!” Lady Yan and the others stood up to send him off.

Han Li faintly smiled, turned his body as easily as wind, and left the room.

Just as Han Li had left the small building, there were the sounds of many hurried footsteps from behind him.

“Senior Apprentice Brother Han, wait a moment. My second sister has come to find you for a certain matter!” Han Li heard the shouting voice of that young girl, Mo Caihuan, and sighed. He helpless turned his body.

He saw that little demoness take the lead at the front, followed by Mo Fengwu and Mo Yuzhu. They were all walking straight toward him.

Mo Caihuan overtook Han Li by a few steps. Then she widely opened her eyes, walked around him in a circle, and smacked her lips incessantly as if she were looking at a rare object!

Alright! Senior Apprentice Brother Han, I was already quite bitter from being cheated! However, I didn't expect that you were also a faker! You actually went as far as to use a some small thing to trick me into moving around in circles.”

When Han Li heard this, he rolled his eyes at this girl. What ‘small thing’? This girl clearly wants a better gift, and thus, he must leave at once!

“Third sister, don't be rude. Stop making trouble for Young Master Han.”

This was the first time Han Li heard Mo Fengwu's voice. It was completely gentle and soft, like velvet, and could give a person a sense of comfort.

“What! Am I not taking revenge on behalf of our mothers? Who let this guy act so lofty in front of my mother!?” Mo Caihuan angrily asked.

Sure enough, the words Han Li heard fit his expectations. This girl had came here purely to vex him. In that case, he no longer paid notice of the little demoness and turned his head to Mo Fengwu , “Second junior apprentice sister, is something on your mind that compelled you to find me?”

Having Han Li speak to her caused her to complexion to slightly red. However, she continued, softly saying, “Fengwu came to find Young Master to simply know whether Third Sister's Winding Fragrance Pills were truly gifted by Young master. Has my father's medical expertise been completely passed down to Young Master?”

When Han Li had first seen Mo Fengwu, he had quite a favorable impression of her. Now that he had seen this shy jade person speak so tenderly, his mind could not help but feel a large amount of sympathy toward her.

(TL: “Jade Person”: 玉人 lit. jade person, refined beauty, I got tired to saying the word beauty...)

As a result, he politely said, “In response to second junior apprentice sister's question, Han Li will naturally say all he knows. Junior apprentice

sister Caihuan's Winding Fragrance Pills were truly gifted by me. I have also indeed learned many medicinal recipes and obtained great medical expertise. This Winding Fragrance Pill was such a recipe....Could it be that junior apprentice sister Fengwu is greatly interested in this?"

Ever since Han Li had seen the medicinal herbs growing in the back garden, he knew for certain that there was someone here learning Doctor Mo's medical expertise. Now that he saw Mo Fenwu ask this, his mind knew that it was most likely to be the jade person before him.

As expected, after Han Li said these words, this young woman, who originally seemed extremely gentle and quiet, displayed a cheerful expression from her eyes as she said, "I won't conceal this from Young Master. Ever since Fengwu was a child, she was greatly interested in Father's medical skills and meticulously studied many of Father's medical books and experiences. Unfortunately, when Father departed the Mo Estate, Feng Wu's age was still young, and thus, what she had acquired was quite limited."

After she finished speaking, Mo Fengwu was somewhat hesitant, but still she continued, "Therefore, Fengwu has a request which she hopes Young Master will be able to complete....Is it possible for your distinguished self to give a copy of father's medical skills and insight to Fengwu to let her learn a few things and deepen her own medical expertise?"

After she said these words, this second junior apprentice sister from the Mo Estate blushed. It was clear that to boldly request this of him was quite embarrassing for her.

After Han Li finished hearing the jade person's request, he didn't think of it in the least and immediately agreed.

"No problem. Tomorrow, when I come to the Mo Estate, I will give the few of Doctor Mo's remaining manuscripts and prescriptions to second junior apprentice sister. Naturally, these already belonged to the Mo Estate. I had originally planned to hand them over to Fourth Martial Mother, but since second junior apprentice sister wants them, giving

them to second junior apprentice sister would be the same.” Han Li said with a smile.

“A great many thanks, Young Master! Fengwu can’t help but be grateful!” Mo Fengwu’s face showed an appreciation for his decision.

“Second sister, why in the world are you thanking him? Did you not hear him say that those objects originally belonged to us? He should be giving them to you of his own volition.” The nearby Mo Caihuan blinked several times before interrupting.

After Han Li heard the words of the young girl, he shot her a glance and thought, “If it wasn’t your second sister, such a gentle and pleasant beauty, requesting this of me, would I still return these items, which fell into my possession, to the Mo Estate? I wouldn’t even think of it!”

“Third Sister, don’t speak drivel. Young Master Han will bring us Father’s remnants without the slightest hesitation. This sufficiently shows Young Master’s intentions.”

Seeing something amiss between Han Li and Mo Caihuan, Mo Fengwu hastily chided the young girl and then pulled her away. After she gracefully bowed to Han Li, she took her leave.

From the beginning to end, the Mo Estate’s eldest daughter, Mo Yuzhu, hadn’t said a word. After she saw her two sisters depart, she took a deep look at Han Li and left.

“The Mo Estate’s eldest daughter, what meaning did her glance hold? Does she appreciate me, loathe me, or even both?” Han Li threw Mo Yuzhu a departing glance, somewhat at a loss.

However, Han Li shrugged his shoulders and thought of it no longer. He then left the Mo Estate.

By the time Han Li returned to the inn, the newly appointed Fourth Level Gang’s Gang Leader Sun Ergou and one other person had already been waiting for a while outside his room. Naturally, Crooked Soul was there as well.

After Han Li saw Sun Ergou, he nodded his head and pushed open the

room's door. Sun Ergou and the other person immediately followed him inside. Then each person had a man respectfully standing on either side of them to attend to their needs.

After Han Li sat down, he sized up the stranger that came in with Sun Ergou. He was a robust man of perhaps thirty years and had a frightening face as well as a fearsome appearance.

"Seeing your bright red face, you must've already acquired the seat as the Gang Leader of the Fourth Level Gang!" Han Li faintly said to Sun Ergou.

"Take a seat! Take a seat! It was because of this Young Master's backing that this servant is where he is today!" Sun Erhou hastily replied, beaming with joy.

"So long as you know! I will not meddle with the Fourth Level Gang's affairs, but you must use the Fourth Level Gang's power in accordance to my instructions. Otherwise, I wouldn't mind switching in a different Gang Leader." Han Li coldly warned.

These words made Sun Ergou, originally lost in joy, immediately shiver, greatly clearing his clouded mind.

"I will follow Young Master's instructions at any cost. Even if it costs me my life, I will do it!" Sun Ergou assumed a loyal appearance in a rush.

Han Li faintly let out an "En", no longer taking notice of Sun Ergou and instead turning his gaze to the other man.

"You were the one that heard the Immortals' conversation?" Han Li asked, rather interested.

"That's right. This servant Xi Tieniu had truly heard this!" The robust man respectfully replied.

(TL: "Tieniu" 铁牛-Iron Bull)

Though this person might be strong and tall, he was not at all stupid. He clearly understood that this unremarkable youth before him had elevated Sun Ergou, who was originally of the same status of himself, to

the Gang Leader's position. Thus, he didn't dare be negligent.

Han Li was very satisfied. So long as this man was clever, this affair would be handled smoothly.

"Tell me about the day when you saw the Immortal couple, from start to finish. If I am satisfied, I'll have you be Sun Ergou's assistant and turn you into the Fourth Level Gang's Vice Gang Leader." Han Li knew that only with the attachment of rewards would others work with enthusiasm. As a result, he made such an unrestrained promise.

As expected, when Xi Tieniu heard what was said, he was delighted. He excitedly slapped his chest immediately, expressing that he would surely satisfy Han Li.

When Sun Ergou heard these words, he was somewhat unwilling. However, he didn't dare to show the slightest bit of disagreement on his face.

As a result, after Xi Tieniu calmed down a bit, he narrated the day he came across the Immortals once through and in great detail.

Xi Tieniu's account and the finer details spoken by Sun Ergou were much different, but the overall course of events were almost entirely the same.

"This Immortal couple, did they mention any time or place?" After Han Li finished hearing Tieniu's statement, he asked of the matter that he was most concerned about.

Chapter 125: Plans

“Time? Place?” When Xi Tieniu heard this, he was stunned momentarily. It seemed he had no recollection of it. But now, seeing Han Li so serious, he knew this was the crucial point of his service. He lowered his head and pondered deeply, trying to recollect his memory.

Half a quarter of an hour later....

“Got it!” Xi Tieniu suddenly shouted, raising his head. His face was completely cheerful.

“I heard the female Immortal tell her male companion that before they participate in the Immortal’s Great Assembly, he was to accompany her to an Immortal gathering place called the Great South Valley.”

(TL: Great South (Tainan)太南 could almost mean southmost or the most southern)

“Great South Valley?” Han Li softly murmured to himself. He had never heard of it before, not even the slightest impression.

Han Li turned his gaze to Sun Ergou. If this place had a name, then this local gang boss should have a bit of information.

“There is no such place in Jia Yuan City! If there is truly such a valley, I would remember it quite clearly.” Sun Ergou creased his brow and shook his head left and right.

“Did you for some reason remember incorrectly?” Han Li brought his gaze back to Xi Tieniu as he spoke in a cold, severe tone.

“I absolutely did not. That woman also said that, as long as they hurry for half a day, she would be able to attend the meeting with her friend at Great South Valley.” Xi Tieniu said, hastily swearing to the heavens.

“Half a day! If a person were to walk by foot then they would no longer be in the vicinity of Jia Yuan City. But if these two were rushing on flying beasts, then the scope would be great. Even so, it shouldn’t stray from the boundaries of Lan Province.” Han Li inwardly pondered.

“Do you two know of any places called ‘Great South Valley’ or with names that include ‘Great South’?” Han Li’s expression eased a bit as he asked the two.

“Sun Ergou and Xi Tieniu looked at each other and spoke nearly at the same time:

“Great South Temple.”

“Great South Mountain.”

“There are two places called Great South?” Han Li was surprised. Groaning, he started to have a small headache.

“Young Master, there isn’t! There is only one!” Sun Ergou hastily replied.

“That Great South Temple was build on Great South Mountain.” Xi Tieniu added, not to be outdone.

“Oh! Very good. Then it seems that Great South Valley should located there,” Han Li easily stated.

“But Young Master, we have never heard of a ‘Great South Valley’ near Great South Mountain! It could be wrong.” Sun Ergou warned with doubt.

When Han Li heard this, he chuckled, “It isn’t wrong, it’s is this place!”

‘You aren’t cultivators, so of course you wouldn’t know of this place. I suppose that there should be some sort of cultivator’s residence,’ Han Li excitedly thought.

“Where is the lowest point of this Great South Mountain?” After Han Li’s excitement, he recalled that this place wasn’t well known and asked without thinking.

“Young Master, Great South Mountain is in the Lan Province’s southmost area.” Sun Ergou respectfully said.

“Lan Province’s south?” Han Li wrinkled his brow. The Hegemon’s Villa and the Sovereign he was to assassinate were right in the center of the Lan Province, out of the way and absolutely inconvenient. It seemed that he would have to make several trips.

“Sun Ergou, after you return, have Xi Tieniu become the Fourth Level Gang’s Vice Commander. I know you aren’t too willing but since I already promised this person, the promise must be kept.” Han Li instructed Sun Ergou.

“I don’t dare to refuse, Young Master. Your wish is my command. I wouldn’t voice even half a complaint!” When Sun Ergou heard this, he had a fright. Recalling what Han Li had said before, his complexion turned pale.

“Be at ease, I am well aware of your loyalty. This bottle contains the antidote that will completely dissolve the poison in your body. Just like I promised, you will have nothing further to fear. I treat everyone fairly, so I will certainly not cheat you.” Han Li removed a bottle of medicine and handed it over to Sun Ergou.

When Sun Ergou saw this, he was pleased beyond expectation. The Rotten Heart Pill inside his body had made his meals unappetizing and his sleep restless. Now that he could completely remove it, how could he not be moved?

“Thank you, Young Master! Thank you, Young Master! This servant will certainly repay this favor even if he were to die the cruelest death!” After Sun Ergou took the bottle, he sincerely said these words.

Han Li non-committedly nodded his head.

The reason why he had given the cure to Sun Ergou so frankly was mostly because he felt that giving Sun Ergou a dose of antidote every month would be far too troublesome! Since he would be far away from Jia Yuan City for a prolonged period of time, he decided to forego using poison to control Sun Ergou. Of course, if someday these two truly betrayed him, Han Li wouldn’t care about it in the least. He would just immediately kill the two and find their replacements.

In addition, Han Li had no use for the Fourth Level Gang as of now. He had already prepared the Fourth Level Gang to be a fallback plan in case all else failed.

Han Li clearly understood that in this world, there were no loyalty nor

betrayal without reason. By using force to control others, it would be the easiest method to acquire the desired results. But at the same time, it was also the worst method, because the party being forced may retaliate at any time. As a result, if one were to instill some loyalty, it would be best to include both incentives and punishment.

Hence, Han Li gave Sun Ergou the cure. On one hand, he would greatly raise Sun Ergou's loyalty for a long period of time. On the other, Xi Tieniu and Sun Ergou would feel meaning behind his words: Results will merit rewards and mistakes will be punished. This benefited Han Li's long term control over the two.

That was what Han Li had thought after some deliberation.

After Han Li saw Sun Ergou consume the cure, he suddenly said something that made Sun Ergou both frightened and happy.

"I will leave Crooked Soul in your care later on, but I won't allow you to use it to provoke quarrels. Although this Crooked Soul may be ferocious, there are a great many extraordinary eccentrics in this world. You might be so unlucky as to provoke a deathly calamity. Keep this in mind!" Han Li said with a heavy tone.

"Of course, I will keep this in mind. I will properly make arrangements for Sir Crooked Soul. Esteemed Young Master, please feel at ease." Sun Ergou was like a chick pecking grain, nodding his head incessantly.

"Were it not for the fact that I no longer need Crooked Soul as a personal bodyguard, his far too eye-catching appearance, and the inconvenience of him following me on a long journey, there is no way I could hand over Crooked Soul to this person's care!" Thinking this, Han Li sighed and inwardly shook his head, somewhat reluctant to part with his large companion.

"Look out for yourselves! In the coming days, you do not need to come see me, I will soon leave on a prolonged journey far from here, and I do not know when I will return." Han Li softly waved his hand as he told them to leave.

When Sun Ergou and Xi Tieniu heard these words, they respectfully

withdrew from the room, leaving Han Li as the sole person within. Even so, he was still contemplating about something.

“This Great South Valley, at the very bottom of Great South Mountain... what sort of cultivators will there be? If I come to their door without prior notice, would it be improper? Would I encounter danger?” Han Li foolishly thought. As of now, he could not help but let his mind wander and enter a state of selflessness.

Time flew by, and in a blink of an eye, two months had already passed. At this moment, Han Li could not longer be found in Jia Yuan City. Furthermore, Han Li’s silhouette would no longer be seen for quite a long time.

Chapter 126: Great South Mountain, Great South Valley, and a Youth

Guang Gui City was located in the southernmost part of the Lan Province. Not very large in size, the city contained only a few hundred thousand people, one fifth that of Jia Yuan City. However, this place was surrounded by mountains from three sides with the fourth side against a lake. Unlike the rich nobles' vacationing destinations, this graceful environment facilitated the growth of several rarely-seen fruits, a local specialty that caused this small city to have quite a reputation.

Great South Mountain was located not far west of Guang Gui City. It stood three thousand meters high as the Lan Province's fourth tallest mountain and was enveloped in mist all year long. On the mountain's peak, there was a moderately sized temple, Great South Temple. Because this temple's divinations were quite accurate, every year a few high ranking officials and nobles went out of their way to come pray, giving large amounts of monetary offerings to the temple. As a result, it earned a widespread reputation for burning incense without interruptions at its temple front.

Currently, in the woods down at the base of Great South Mountain, a person was sitting in the dense undergrowth beneath a huge tree. His hands grasped a flickering red light that was pressed up against his Dantian as it repeatedly rocked back and forth.

Suddenly, this person's body shook, and he let out a gloomy groan. He lowered the shining red object in his hand, exposing its true appearance. It was actually a top-quality fine azure jade. Not only was this fine jade completely pure, there were also several faint traces of red light seeping out from within the depths of the jade. Upon seeing this, any passerby could make out this jade was no mundane object and held considerable value.

This person slowly withdrew the azure jade from his abdomen and raised his head to look at the sky, showing that he was a common male

youth. He was precisely Han Li, who had disappeared from Jia Yuan City.

Han Li then lowered his head and looked at the object in his hand. His face could not help but expose a cheerful expression.

Ever since the day he obtained this Precious Warm Yang Jade, it had continuously extracted the cold Yin poison from his body. As a result, the poison was completely extracted only after half a month. Even so, it had not been easy. When drawing out the poison, Han Li greatly suffered from an aching itch that entered his bones. He still had lingering trepidation every time he remembered the experience.

However, this Precious Warm Yang Jade was truly a treasure. It actually contained Spiritual Qi, expelling his poison to great effect and with much ease. He feared if he had not acquired this, he would need tens of days to thoroughly remove his body's poison.

Thinking of this, Han Li returned the precious jade into the wooden box beside him, which he then carefully hid it away on his person.

As Han Li stood up and moved his stiff limbs about, his thoughts drifted back to his experiences these past two months.

After Han Li had finished making his arrangements, he went to the Mo Estate the following day and obtained information on Ouyang Feitian and the Hegemon's Villa. He then rode on a precious horse gifted by the Mo Estate and hastily journeyed day and night, eventually arriving at the Hegemon's Villa within ten days.

After several days of continuous spying and infiltration, Han Li acquired a golden opportunity and sent out his precious talisman towards Ouyang Feitian, who was admiring the full moon all alone. Sacrificing a use of his sword talisman, he beheaded him in a moment and took his life.

The course of events went by exceptionally smoothly. Not a wave of commotion arose, nearly causing Han Li to suspect that the person he had killed was perhaps a fake. Afterwards, he inspected the dead body on several places, finding Ouyang Feitian's personal scar and birthmark and confirming that he did not kill the wrong person. Han Li then sighed and brought the head back to Jia Yuan City.

After he returned to the Mo Estate and gave Ouyang Feitian's severed head to Lady Yan for inspection, she told him that Ouyang Feitian practiced Jiang Hu's top defensive technique, "Overlord's Armor". He had long since trained his entire body until was impervious to sword and spear, reducing the sharp edge of a blade to something like mud; it would be difficult to even cause the slightest wound. Nevertheless, she hadn't expected Han Li to actually bring back his head.

Only now did Han Li understand that this Ouyang Feitian had most likely considered his sword talisman to be a concealed weapon. As a result, he did not dodge, letting Han Li dispatch him in such an effortless manner.

The remaining matters were simple. After Lady Yan finished confirming the identity of the severed head, she brought out the precious jade and exchanged it for Han Li's antidote. Although Han Li obtained the precious jade, Lady Yan urged him to stay, only to be met with denial. He was not in the mood to exchange pleasantries with the people of the Mo Estate. He then immediately departed from Jia Yuan City once more and rushed over to Great South Mountain.

On the way, Han Li cured his poison while thinking of how he should befriend the cultivators of Great South Valley.

Because Han Li didn't know whether the other party was evil or just, he did not plan to bravely come knocking on their door. In case the cultivators were evil and demonic, he did not want to voluntarily deliver himself to their door like a dish to be swallowed in a single bite!

As a result, just as Han Li reached Great South Mountain, he went to the neighboring villages to ask about Great South Valley and listened to a few anecdotes and a few queer and bizarre matters.

According to the villagers, the northern side of Great South Mountain faced a very mysterious mountain slope covered year long by a dense fog. Travelers who entered it wouldn't be able to see their five fingers in front of them.

It was reasonable to say that for the Great South Mountain to have

some mountain fog was quite ordinary. However, such a thick mountain fog enveloping an area year round was quite a bit inconceivable.

As a result, a few of the more courageous villagers had already braved the fog several times. But what was astonishing was that every time someone entered, they would unwittingly lose their direction. Not long after, they would unintentionally move away from the mountain fog and arrive where they had started, causing people to feel amazed to no end.

Because this mountain slope was so queer and that people could enter without any sort of consequence, even more villagers happily and tirelessly rushed in, wanting to unravel this riddle. However, the villagers had somehow provoked the anger of the mountain slope's dense fog. Ever since an unknown day, all the villagers that entered the strange slope did not immediately exit the dense fog, but were instead trapped for two to three days, completely weakened by hunger. Only then were they able to walk away from the fog.

Thus, no one had dared to rush the strange mountain slope ever again. The villagers eventually became accustomed to that place and turned a blind eye to it.

After Han Li heard this, he was overjoyed.

Han Li knew this strange mountain slope was most likely the place he was looking for. Furthermore, even if this place wasn't that Great South Valley, it was certain to be the residence of some cultivators.

What Han Li was most happy about from the villagers account was that the temperament of the mountain slope's master could not at all be regarded as malicious. He shouldn't be a cultivator that would immediately kill him should they meet. Hence, there should be much leeway in meeting him.

Although that was the case, Han Li still wouldn't pay a visit without a plan. Instead, he would stay in the woods. Only after he completely prepared his body's concealed weapons would he go and pay a visit in his peak state. That way, if something were to go wrong, he was quite certain that he would be able to escape.

After Han Li thought of this, he planned to lodge in a villager's house, eat some food and stay the night. The day after he would go visit that strange slope.

Thus, Han Li walked away from the woods towards the nearby small village.

Just as he was about to enter the small village, Han Li saw a fifteen to sixteen year-old youth wearing white clothes. He stood at the village's entrance with several villagers around him, joyfully talking about something.

Han Li was slightly surprised that an outsider had appeared here at this moment. It was quite possible that this was no ordinary person, so naturally, Han Li took a glance at him with the Heaven's Eye Technique.

With just a look, Han Li's heart was overjoyed. It turned out that this white clothed youth's body was enveloped in a faint spiritual light slightly lesser than his own. This youngster was also a cultivator.

The youngster in the distance seemed to have sensed someone looking at him and turned toward Han Li. Once he saw Han Li, his face immediately lit up with a happy expression, and he hastily ran over in an instant.

"Is this brother also heading toward Great South Valley? Brother, I am Wan Xiaoshan of the Dry Precipice Mountain's Wan Clan! Want to go together to pay our respects?" This youth ran until he was panting and without waiting for his breath to steady, he impatiently said this to Han Li.

(TL: 万 Wan of the Wan Clan literally means ten thousand. "Xiaoshan" means Little Mountain)

Han Li glanced at the youngster's delicate features and delicate skin, all of which were characteristics belonging to an influential family's Young Master who lived like a prince.

"Of course we can. However, do you know where Great South Valley is located?" After Han Li heard his request, Han Li said this while remaining

completely calm.

“Hehe! I’ve only heard my clan members say that Great South Valley was on Great South Mountain’s northern face. Its gate is covered in dense fog all year long. However, I don’t know the specifics. I’ve asked a few of the villagers where Great South Valley is located, and they also don’t know! But Brother is sure to know, right?” Somewhat embarrassed, the youth scratched his head before looking at Han Li with a hopeful gaze.

“Little Brother, is this the first time you’ve journeyed abroad?” When Han Li heard the other person’s words, he suppressed the happiness in his thoughts and asked with a smile.

“Big Brother guessed correctly! This is my first time traveling so far from home.” The youth somewhat bashfully nodded his head.

“Alright then, follow me! I will bring you along.” Han Li hadn’t been completely certain that the strange slope was the Great South Valley he was trying to find, but now that he heard the youth’s words, he was completely certain.

“That’s great! This time I can learn and experience quite a bit!” When the youth heard Han Li’s words, he could not help cheerfully say this with excitement.

Seeing the youngster like this, Han Li faintly smiled. From the words that had just left the youth’s mouth, he was able to understand a bit more about cultivators.

“What do you want to learn and experience by going to Great South Valley?” Han Li slowly walked to the strange slope with the youngster. The place had long been secretly scouted by him several times, and he had remembered the place very clearly.

“There’s too much to say. I want to look at the secret arts and magic techniques belonging to other clans and schools. I also want to trade with them for things that I like.” The youngster spoke without thinking.

“Oh!” Han Li softly agreed. However, his mind was somewhat puzzled. When he heard the youth’s voice, he felt that this Great South Valley

wasn't just a gathering of numerous cultivators. Could it be that some greater event would later occur?

Han Li grew anxious at this thought.

Chapter 127: Knowledge on Spiritual Roots

And just like that, the two of them walked together while chatting lazily, randomly about all sorts of topics. Although they were 'chatting lazily', it was better to say that Han Li was the one asking the questions while the youths was the one answering. From the mouth of the youth, Han Li finally obtained some news about the world of cultivators as well as finally understanding some of the fundamental facts about that world.

For example, the levels of cultivation could be classified into the lower realm, middle realm and higher realm.

The lower realm consisted five stages: Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, Nascent Soul, Deity Transformation. The middle realm consisted of Void level, Integration Level, and Great Ascension Level. And upon reaching the higher realm, it could be said that one truly stepped into the realms of Immortals. Cultivators at the higher realm could fly through the skies and visit the Immortal realm with a lifespan as long as that of heaven and earth.

However, it was easier said than done! It was extremely tough to cultivate to such a level.

Not to mention cultivating all the three realms. Even in the most basic, the lower realm, there was no one in the history of state of Yue who had successfully cultivated to the peak of the Deity Transformation stage. At most, they were stuck in the Nascent Soul stage. But even then, reaching Nascent Soul was exceedingly rare. Only a few eccentrics with great luck and karmic fortune would be able to do so.

According to the youth, an individual's lifespan was directly linked to his cultivation level, and each successive breakthrough would prolong his lifespan.

Mortals, at most, could only live for 100 years, but even that was very rare among mortals.

For cultivators who successfully stepped into Foundation Establishment, they would have a lifespan of 200 years. This was very common. And if

an individual was lucky enough to reach Core Formation, his lifespan would be further doubled to 400 and 500 years. And...if that individual somehow managed to meet a fortuitous encounter through have extreme luck and managed to form his Nascent Soul, then, congratulations! His lifespan would be extended to a 1000 years! As long as the person in question was a cultivator, this was all within the realm of possibility!

Suddenly, the white-robed youth stopped here. He was extremely envious of those eccentrics with a lifespan of 800 to 1,000 years. These people had ten times the lifespan of a normal human!

Han Li was awestruck as he listened by the youth's side, but he had already guessed that lifespan of cultivators would be longer when compared to that of ordinary humans. But what he hadn't expect was that the differences in lifespan would be so ridiculous! 1,000 years of life, wouldn't that mean that the eccentric had become a 1,000 year-old tortoise? Han Li thought in his heart somewhat maliciously.

But if just reaching the Nascent Soul stage would enable you to live so long, what about Deity Transformation Stage? And the further stages in the middle and higher realms? How long would they live then?

Han Li finally couldn't bear it anymore and indirectly asked..

"Who knows?" Maybe they can live forever, enjoying eternal youth?" The youth exclaimed.

"Legend has it that cultivators who reached the 'Great Perfection' circle of the Deity Transformation stage have to leave this world and travel to a higher realm in another space. But as to where and what the higher realm is, no one knows, because no one has ever returned from there."

"No one has ever returned? Then how do we determine the different levels of the Deity Transformation Stage?" Han Li asked somewhat dejectedly. However, the youth in front of him probably could not answer this as well.

Other than the different levels in cultivations, Han Li now had a general understanding of the cultivation clans and sects within the state of Yue.

The youth may not know matters of other places, but regarding the state of Yue's cultivation world, the youth seemed quite knowledgeable as he proceeded to explain in great details.

From his mouth, Han Li knew that in the state of Yue, there existed a total of seven cultivation sects: the Masked Moon Sect, Yellow Maple Valley, Spirit Beast Mountain, Clear Void Sect, Saber Transformation Dock, Heavenly Watchtower Castle, and the Giant Sword Sect. Out of these seven, the Masked Moon Sect was the most powerful. Spirit Beast Mountain was a close second, and as for the rest, their power levels were roughly evenly matched.

If one were to say that these various cultivator sects were the great tree providing support for the whole of state of Yue, the other various cultivator clans and families would be the leaves and branches that depended on the great tree for survival.

And according to the youth, the ancestors from the Immortal cultivators clans were once disciples of the cultivator sects. The bloodline of the sect disciples eventually flowed out over the generations and slowly became a cultivator clan.

Thus, one could say from this that all cultivators possessed something called 'spiritual roots'.

'Spiritual roots'. What exactly were they? Not even Immortal cultivators know everything about them, but what they did know was that if a person lacked spiritual roots, that person couldn't aspire to traverse the path of cultivation. After all, if one had no spiritual roots, how could he even absorb Spiritual Qi? And if Spiritual Qi couldn't be absorbed, how could he become an Immortal cultivator?

Of course, those who were born with spiritual roots were extremely rare among the commoners. It could be said that there would only one would be born with spiritual roots in a batch of tens of thousands, and thus, there were only a selected few who would be able to embark on the pathway to become an Immortal. But still, the majority of those with spiritual roots lived out their lives as a commoner since it was extremely

difficult for individuals to know if they possessed spiritual roots or not, causing great headache to recruiters from the Immortal sects.

Even possessing spiritual roots did not guarantee that one was qualified to enter the Immortal sects. This was because there were differences in grade among spiritual roots.

As the saying went, spiritual roots could be categorised into five categories: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. The majority of cultivators had roots an impure mixture of four or all five of the elements. Although these people were able to absorb Spiritual Qi of Heaven and Earth, they would progress extremely slowly in terms of their cultivation. At most, they could only reach the third or fourth level of the Qi Condensation Stage before reaching a bottleneck that halted all hopes of breaking through to Foundation Establishment.

Spiritual roots with a mixture of four or five elements were known as “false spiritual roots” in the Immortal world, while spiritual roots of two to three elements, were known as “true spiritual roots”. Those with true spiritual roots would naturally cultivate many times faster when compared to those with false spiritual roots.

And as for spiritual roots with only one element, they known as “heavenly spiritual roots”; those who received them were truly favored by heavens. With heavenly spiritual roots, regardless of which of the five elements the spiritual root belonged to, the cultivation rate would be faster by two to three times when compared to those with true spiritual roots. And upon reaching the peak of Foundation Establishment, they would not encounter any bottlenecks when attempting to break through to Core Formation. If true spiritual roots already increased the rate of cultivation, the heavenly spiritual roots would make people angry to a point of vomiting blood, as they enabled the individual to reach Core Formation easily without facing any bottlenecks.

One must know that in a group of ten Qi Condensation cultivators, even with the aid from a Foundation Establishment elder, only one of them would be able to reach Foundation Establishment. But as for Core Formation, not even one in 100 Foundation Establishment cultivators

would be able to reach it.

The probability of reaching Core Formation could only be described as immensely difficult, which was why many people were envious of those who possessed heavenly spiritual roots. Every time someone with heavenly spiritual roots appeared, they would be frenziedly sought after by the Immortal sects. After all, this meant that in the future, their sect would have an additional Core Formation elder, furthering consolidating the power of their sect.

However, being so precious and rare, the chance of something like the heavenly spiritual root appearing was close to nil, only once in several hundred years. Other than these spiritual roots, there was still a type of spiritual roots that did not belong to any of the five elements. This other kind of spiritual roots was known as 'mutated spiritual roots', and the rate of its appearance was much more frequent, about once every 20 to 30 years.

Mutated spiritual roots referred to spiritual roots that evolved through the combination of any two or three of the five elements.

Example, a spiritual root of both earth and water element undergo a mutation and evolved into that of the lightning element; Metal and water element mutated and evolved into the ice element. Not only that, there were also darkness-element roots and wind-elements roots, as well as countless other variations.

For individuals who possessed mutated spiritual roots, although they would still meet a bottleneck when attempting to step into Core Formation, their cultivation speed was roughly equal to those with heavenly spiritual roots. Furthermore, if those with mutated spiritual roots were able to find a cultivation art that matches their element, they would undoubtedly be the strongest among their generation, capable of fighting against three to four cultivators at the same cultivation level.

As a result, those with mutated roots were also greatly welcomed by the Immortal sects.

However, even finding individuals with true spiritual roots was a

headache for recruits from the Immortal sects, let alone heavenly spiritual roots and mutated spiritual roots.

That was because it was simply impossible for Immortal recruiters to go into every nook and alley, demanding people to turn their children in for testing. And even then, true spiritual roots were pretty uncommon, with only one in every five to six individuals appearing with spiritual roots. Hence, some Immortal sects eventually collapsed simply because they could not find or groom anyone with spiritual roots.

Regarding this embarrassing situation, many cultivators investigated and realised that spiritual roots were usually passed on through bloodline.

For example, if a man or a woman possessed spiritual roots, the children they birthed would have a 25 percent chance of being born with spiritual roots. And naturally, if both the mother and the father were possessors of spiritual roots, the children they birthed who have a higher probability of inheriting spiritual roots.

After this matter was discovered, many people grew agitated.

This agitation was directed towards the young sect members. Under their elders' pressure, many youth from the various sects were forced out to the secular world to get married and settle down. Only after having a son or daughter would they be allowed to return back to their sect for cultivation.

Whenever the sects lacked of disciples, they would select the descendants of their disciples with spiritual roots. This way, the rate of finding people with spiritual roots would greatly increase.

The problematic situation faced by Immortal sects could finally be considered partially resolved.

Eventually over time, more and more people with spiritual roots were born, which paved the way for the formation of cultivator clans and families.

These cultivator clans might not possess high-level cultivation arts, but

they do not face a shortage of low-level cultivation arts and techniques. Eventually, they became the external window that the Immortal sects could use to reach out to the secular world.

This essentially meant that behind each cultivator clan was backed by a powerful Immortal sect. Having explained all of this, this white-robed youth felt extremely satisfied. It had been far too long since he last showed off his knowledge.

The feeling of when the listener was fully focused on the words he spoke made him feel extremely happy and well-disposed towards Han Li. Hence, so he held nothing back, wanting to show off his knowledge in front of Han Li. Naturally, Han Li was pleased with such an arrangement, and he oftentimes interjected appropriately, giving the white-robed youth another chance to expound on his knowledge. What a pity, this hill that was shrouded by fog wasn't very far from the village. After a few hours, both of them had already arrived at the hillside.

Having traveled only a short journey, Han Li couldn't help being somewhat dissatisfied for not having enough time to learn more regarding the matters of the cultivation world. He deeply wanted to walk back to the village again so that he could expand his knowledge, but he knew that it was impossible to do so. Sighing, he looked at the youth beside him with disappointment misting over his eyes.

Chapter 128: Great South Small Meeting

“Which clan is Brother from?” After the youth finished looking at the dense fog with excitement, he seemed to have remembered something, so he turned his head to ask.

When Han Li had chatted with the youth just a moment ago, he realized that in the world of cultivators, aside from cultivation sects and clans, the number of rogue cultivators was not small.

The majority of these so-called rogue cultivators were either the last generation of a fallen cultivation clan or people like Han Li, mortals who accidentally stumbled upon some cultivation art and voluntarily entered the world of cultivators. Furthermore, the rogue cultivators from declining sects were separated from their inheritance; their cultivation was, for the most part, not at a high stage, generally lingering at Qi Condensation. As a result, cultivation clans have rarely treated rogue cultivators with high regard and had somewhat held them in contempt, just like how rich families from the secular world looked down upon poor and destitute families.

“I do not come from a clan, but rather I’ve cultivated by myself!” After Han Li thought for a moment, he decided to speak the truth. After all, pretending to be a member from another clan was far too easy to expose.

“Your esteemed self is a rogue cultivator!?” Although this was quite unexpected to the youth, his face didn’t wear the slightest look of discrimination but instead had a look of pleasant surprised.

He excitedly circled around Han Li, looking at Han Li as if he were a rare object.

“Didn’t Little Brother just say a moment ago that cultivation clans looked down upon rogue cultivators? How are you still so happy?” Han Li asked, somewhat amazed by this.

“They do, but don’t confuse our Wan clan with other cultivator clans. Our Wan clan has always treated rogue cultivators well!” The youth pridefully replied. He seemed quite proud of his clan’s practices.

“Our Wan clan’s ancestors were originally rogue cultivators. However they were fortunate enough to enter a cultivation school, becoming official disciples of the Giant Sword Sect. At this point, our Wan clan was established, and because of our origins, the rules of our Wan clan have always made it forbidden to discriminate against rogue cultivators.” The youth said with a smile.

“Actually, it isn’t limited to our Wan clan. A few other clans’ ancestors were also rogue cultivators, therefore they also bear no ill will toward rogue cultivators. However, these clans take up far too small a portion of the entirety of cultivation clans. That is why there is the saying that cultivator clans discriminate against rogue cultivators.” The youth added while shaking his head.

“So it’s like that! It seems I am quite lucky. My first meeting was with a little brother from this sort of clan, the Wan clan.” After Han Li heard the other side’s response to his identity as a rogue cultivator, he had somewhat loosened his guard around the youth.

“However Brother, throughout the entire journey, you’ve asked about so many commonly known matters in the world of cultivators. Could it be that brother is a new cultivator that had just left the mountain?” The youth turned his eyes, saying this with sudden realization. It was unknown why he became intelligent all of a sudden.

When Han Li heard this, his face slightly smiled, and he used his hand to pat the youth’s shoulders. He said somewhat apologetically, “I hadn’t meant to deliberately fool Little Brother, but I had just entered the world of cultivation. I had a few misgivings!”

“It doesn’t matter, I don’t mind! However, this Big Brother should tell me his name! In the future, you should directly call me Xiaoshan, I won’t mind.” Wan Xiaoshan was clearly a familiar kind of person, saying this without a care in the world.

“Hehe! I am Han Li. I truly just entered the world of cultivation. I hope Brother Xiaoshan will take care of me!” Han Li’s impression of Wan Xiaoshan was quite favorable, causing the tone of his words to become

much more amiable.

“No problem. If there is something Big Brother Han doesn’t understand, do not hesitate to ask. Hehe! Who would have thought that I, Wan Xiaoshan, would be instructing others?” Wan Xiaoshan proudly said.

“If I have any questions, I will certainly ask Xiaoshan. However, shouldn’t we enter the valley?” Han Li slightly smiled, pointing to the sky.

“Aiya! I almost forgot about our true affair.” After Wan Xiaoshan looked to the sky where Han Li’s finger was pointed, he immediately shouted, flustered.

The youth busily searched himself for quite a while before finally taking out a paper talisman from his bosom.

After he made several gestures with his hands and softly spoke several phrases, he threw the paper talisman into the sky. It transformed into a streak of fire that burst into the dense fog, not longer capable of being seen.

“Big Brother Han Li, wait a moment. My announcement talisman will soon enter the valley. The people in the valley will release the spell and guide us there.” After the youth saw Han Li somewhat entranced in the direction that the flame had disappeared, he quickly explained,

“Oh!” Han Li nodded his head, expressing his understanding.

“Big Brother Han Li, on this visit to Great South Valley, surely you have brought quite a few goods to exchange? Can you tell me? Don’t feel embarrassed, this Little Brother will say what he brought first!”

“I brought a dozen elementary low-grade blank paper talismans, two elementary low-grade Invisibility Talismans, two elementary low-grade Fleeing Earth Talismans, one elementary mid-grade Rapid Thunder Talisman, a dozen elementary low-grade Ice Bullet Talismans, an ingot of source iron, a bottle of elementary grade cinnabar, a bundle of whiskers from the Three-Tailed Cat demon beast, medicinal herbs....” Wan Xiaoshan didn’t take notice of the dumbstruck Han Li as he murmured and counted his fingers, listing out his stockpile of items.

“Done! Now it’s Big Brother Han’s turn to say! Big Brother, why is your complexion so white? You...” The youngster blinked. He looked at Han Li, not understanding why Han Li was speechless.

“Don’t tell me that to enter Great South Valley, I must prepare items beforehand?” Han Li complexion was unsightly.

“There is no such rule!” Wan Xiaoshan bluntly replied.

Having heard this, Han Li complexion immediately improved.

“However, those that come to Great South Valley at this time are certain to participate in Great South Small Meeting. Who wouldn’t bring any items? This only happens once every five years; the occasion is for us younger generation of the Lan Province to set up a trading event! Especially for the great Ascended Immortal Great Assembly that our Lan Province will hold a month from now. Those who pass by to participate in Great South’s Small Meeting are numerous. Could it be that Big Brother did not come to take part in the famous Great South Valley’s Small Meeting?” The youth said, shocked. He looked at Han Li with a gaze lacking confidence.

Han Li bitterly smiled.

“Brother Xiaoshan, I truly didn’t know that this place would have a Great South Small Meeting. I merely found out by accident that this place harbored other cultivators. I came to make friends, nothing more. How could I have specially prepared some items beforehand?” Han Li helplessly said as he spread out his hands.

“So it was like that! That is far too unfortunate. Big Brother Han Li has no choice but to squander this golden opportunity. You should know that there are no opportunities to those who lack goods and materials.” Wan Xiaoshan said with a face full of pity, repeatedly sighing at Han Li.

“However, I can’t say that I have nothing on me that I can’t trade. At the very least, do I not have these two talismans?” Han Li thought, mocking himself.

At this moment, the dense fog in front of the two suddenly split as if a

person had cut it with a knife, creating a small path that could fit two people shoulder to shoulder. With a glance, one could not see the other end of the small path, which seemed to be quite a distance away.

“Alright, let’s go!” The youth looked toward Han Li with a wry yet happy face before joyfully rushing in first and disappearing onto the road.

Han Li carefully observed the small path with indifference for a moment, before walking in with striding steps. He walked with stable steps, calm and unhurried.

This path seemed to be quite long, but after walking for a short period of time, he arrived at the end.

Once Han Li walked off the path, something was suddenly revealed before him, a rarely seen fully lush, green valley. The valley was closed off from three sides by mountains. Its only entrance was the mountain side sealed off by dense fog where Han Li had originally entered.

This entire region was quite large, no less than sixteen acres. At the center, there was a large fenced off area with a jade palace pavilion where somewhat bizarrely dressed people left and entered.

(TL: actual measurement was 100 mu 畝 or 16.5 acres.)

In front of the pavilion, there was an expansive azure brick plaza occupied by many people resembling small traders. The entire plaza was set up with small vendors’ stalls. From time to time, he would see one or two people pressed against the front of a booth. They would look at a few things or perhaps softly ask a few questions, but Han Li rarely saw anyone who reached a deal.

Having seen this, Han Li couldn’t help but take in a deep breath. This was the world of cultivators! All the people here were cultivators. Being able to see so many cultivators all at once had left Han Li in somewhat of a trance.

Han Li softly shook his head, clearing his mind a bit. He constantly reminded himself that he wanted to enter a previously unimaginable world. The people here were most likely able to eliminate him with ease.

He must be more cautious and subdued.

With this thought, Han Li turned his head to look at the path that by now had already completely disappeared and raised his leg to walk toward the bright stage.

Chapter 129: Daoist Master Qingyan

Han Li merely walked a few steps before he heard a voice calling him from far away.

“Over here, Big Brother Han!”

Turning his gaze in the direction of the voice, he saw Wan Xiaoshan standing beside a green-robed elderly man, incessantly waving his hands to get his attention.

Han Li lightly smiled as he walked over. When he approached the side of the elderly man, Wan Xiaoshan started an introduction, “This elderly figure is from Great South Valley, Daoist Master Qingyan. He is my father’s bosom friend. The recent Great South Meeting was organised and held by him and a few other elders.”

The moment Han Li heard the youth’s words, he involuntarily cast a few glances at the green-robed senior.

This elderly man was tall and skinny and wore a green scholarly robe. With wide shoulders, long hands, and a pockmarked face, he looked rather terrifying.

After introducing him, the youth spoke to the elderly, “Brother Han is someone I met when I was adventuring outside the valley. Although he is a rogue cultivator, we hit off extremely well. Senior Martial Uncle must take care of him as well!”

The old man regarded Han Li, and suddenly, he shut his eyes, saying:

“Little Brother Han, your wood-element cultivation art is not bad. Reaching the eight stage at such a young age...your achievements are seen extremely rarely even in our cultivation world!”

Han Li bitterly smiled in his heart after he heard the praise of this old man. If it were not for him consuming a large amount of spiritual herbs and pills, how would he have reached the eighth stage so easily? If it weren’t for that, he estimated that he would still be at the third and fourth stage.

But still on the surface, he respectfully replied with a touch of modesty: “Elder Qing, thank you for your praise, but I was just lucky.”

The green robed old man nodded his head and stopped talking to him. Turning his gaze back onto Xiaoshan, he asked, “Little fellow, those in your family have already arrived and are very worried about you. They asked me to bring you to them the moment we met. You should follow me as I led you to them now!”

Upon hearing the news, Wan Xiaoshan couldn’t help but to show a face of depression.

“Don’t tell me that seventh sister and ninth brother came along as well? I’m most afraid of their constant nagging....Is it acceptable if I don’t go?” Wan Xiaoshan gazed at the old man with hopeful eyes.

The green-robed old man stopped smiling and asked, “What do you think?”

“Sigh, of course I have to go back!” Wan Xiaoshan sank his head as he replied in a depressed tone.

“Hmmp! Your guts are not small, and you actually dared to sneak out without informing your family. If you met an Immortal cultivator who was unscrupulous in the middle of your journey, do you think you would still be alive?” The old man harshly berated Xiaoshan while glancing at Han Li out of the corner of his eyes.

“Isn’t this old man hinting that I’m someone with a crooked heart, an extremely unscrupulous Immortal cultivator, and that I tried to get near to Xiaoshan for some other motive?” Han Li observed coldly towards the side, understanding the intent behind the old man’s words.

“Hai! It’s so hard to meet someone I can talk to about everything under the sun, but it seems like we have to be separated temporarily! If I don’t leave and Daoist Master Qingyan were to use his methods, I don’t even know if I can leave here alive.” Han Li helplessly exclaimed in his heart.

“Since Brother Wan wants to go back to meet his family, I shall go by myself and explore the place first. If we have an opportunity in the future,

I will certainly treat Little Brother to a drink.” Han Li clasped his hands as he spoke to Wan Xiaoshan and Daoist Master Qingyan.

“Aiya! Don’t leave so fast, I still want to introduce you to.....”

“Little Brother Han still has something he has to take care of. You shouldn’t disrupt his plans.”

Wan Xiaoshan saw that Han Li was leaving and frantically wanted to try and say something, but he was stopped by Daoist Master Qingyan.

Seeing this unfolding, Han Li smiled towards Wan Xiaoshan before turning and departing.

Meanwhile, that youth followed behind the old man with a face full of depression, as though he was being dragged to his execution ground. He walked slowly towards his family’s direction.

Even though Han Li had been treated like that by Daoist Master Qingyan, he wasn’t annoyed.

After all, as an elderly man, he would have plenty of life experiences. Seeing someone like Han Li, who came from an unknown background, he would surely view him with suspicion. Any normal mortal old man would surely do so, not to mention a senior such as Daoist Master Qingyan.

However, Han Li did not have any malicious intents towards Wan Xiaoshan; he purely wanted to understand matters about the world of cultivators. But now with the appearance of Daoist Master Qingyan, it seemed that he would have to find some other way to get more knowledge about the world of cultivators. Unknowingly, he started to move closer to the Immortal cultivators’ shops.

The cultivators’ shops were situated in a spacious market, lined up in the shape of a “回” design around the market. This way, it was easier for the potential customers in the crowd to browse their merchandise. Lining up in small groups of two to three, the customers split themselves up as they explored the stores, giving the market the atmosphere of a rowdy night market.

It was already approaching late evening, and the lights on the streets

flickered into life. The majority of the merchants lit up their bronze lanterns that contained neither wick nor wax. Instead, the lanterns housed white stones that released a soft light, illuminating the streets.

The light emitted was stronger than ordinary candlelight. Not only was it capable of illuminating a small region, even the nearby streets were illuminated as well. To Han Li, this was an extraordinary treasure! Han Li couldn't help but click his tongue as he exclaimed in wonder

The skies turned dark, but the crowd was even more populated than before. The majority were Immortal cultivators hidden in the crowd, causing the liveliness of the area to be even more rampant. Han Li slowly neared the market, but he didn't bring his horse in. Instead, he observed from the outside, taking note of all the Immortal cultivators he saw.

Because now, at such a close distance, the attire of the Immortal cultivators allowed Han Li to widen his scope and knowledge.

Some of the cultivators had shabby robes on, only covering their private areas, with other parts of their bodies bare for all to see. While others were heavily robed in clothes, not revealing any parts of their skin, a total opposite when compared to the shabbily dressed cultivators. What was more ludicrous was that there was fellow who was obviously a man but was dressed like a woman. This almost caused Han Li to vomit, but luckily these type of strange people weren't often seen. Although the other cultivators were dressed strangely, Han Li was still able to accept it.

After his observation, Han Li's countenance suddenly flickered as his eyes grew brighter.

He discovered, that those in the market, regardless of whether they were merchants setting up stores or Immortal cultivators visiting the markets, all of them were between 10 and 20 years of age. He couldn't even spot a Immortal cultivator older than 30.

This was just as Wan Xiaoshan had described it. Taking place every five years, "The Great South Meeting" was an event targeted young Immortal cultivators. It appeared that those who were older or had a higher status wouldn't appear here. Even Daoist Master Qingyan wouldn't dare to show

his face here.

Thinking of this, he let out a sigh of relief. After all, these old fellows were tough to handle, and if they wanted to deal with him, they would easily be able to do, so just like using a finger and pressing an ant to death. No trouble at all.

However, although the ones in front of his eyes were all young Immortal cultivators, their individual levels of power weren't weak. If Han Li were to compare himself with these cultivators, he could only be considered someone at the mid-tier, average standard. Back in Jia Yuan City, Han Li had once met the blue-clothed man, who was so much stronger than him. Over here, there were five to six Immortal cultivators on the same level as the blue-clothed man, which made Han Li perspire with nervousness.

Chapter 130: Becoming a Member

“Brother, why are you waiting here by yourself? Are you waiting for a friend?” A bright and clear voice suddenly came from behind Han Li, giving him a start.

Han Li slowly turned around and saw six to seven people standing not far from him. The one who spoke was a 27 or 28 year-old cultivator dressed in Daoist robes. This person had a blemishless white face and regular features. He held a horsetail whisk in his arm and was looking at Han Li with a smile.

“Does this Daoist priest have business with myself?” Han Li did not understand the other party’s questions and instead asked him a question in return.

“Hehe! Don’t misunderstand, we aren’t looking at Brother with evil intentions. It’s just that we saw Brother stand by himself with an appearance of curiosity towards everything. That’s why we guessed your esteemed self was a rogue cultivator that attended the meeting alone and thought we’d come and make friends. We’re all rogue cultivators much like your esteemed self.” The Daoist priest explained with a face of benevolence.

“You are all rogue cultivators?” Han Li was slightly shocked.

“That’s right. If your esteemed self is a rogue cultivator, then it would be best to stay together with us. That way, everyone will be able to look after each other during this meeting.” These words came from the delicate and pretty face of a young woman with a scar. Beside her was a large, fully bearded man carrying a broadsword on his back. The two seemed to be married.

“Yes, previously lone rogue cultivators that participated in the trade meet were regularly humiliated by those from large clans because they were too weak!” The Daoist priest solemnly said.

Hearing these two’s words, Han Li had somewhat understood the other party’s intentions.

This group of rogue cultivators were afraid of being bullied by those from cultivator clans during the meet. As a result, they voluntarily gathered together and created a small gang in an attempt to acquire the ability to defend themselves. That was why they looked everywhere for lone rogue cultivators.

Since the other party's intent was clear, Han Li naturally could not refuse these kinds of good intentions. After all, he truly needed a small group to shield him from the rain; he did not care that this could only be considered a temporary thing.

However, he still needed to carefully ask the other party several questions before being able to join them with ease.

"Since you several people have looked out for me, I won't conceal anything. I truly am a rogue cultivator. However, if you wish for me to join your group, could you first introduce yourselves and say what I must do as a member of your group?" Han Li calmly admitted his identity as a rogue cultivator, but as soon as the people in front of him revealed happy expressions, he put forth his request.

"It seems that Brother still has some misgivings! Haha! This is no matter. When the others had barely joined, they spoke almost the same exact words as your esteemed self!" After the Daoist priest and the others heard Han Li's words, not only did they not show an expression of displeasure but instead, they looked at each other and laughed heartily. Afterwards, the Daoist priest said these words:

"I will give you an introduction of these several friends!" The Daoist priest pointed to the several rogue cultivators and said to Han Li with a smile.

"These two are blood brothers from the Dark Blue Wolf Mountains, Hei Mu and Hei Jin." The Daoist priest pointed to the youthful pair and calmly introduced them.

(TL: 黑木 Hei Mu – Black Tree, 黑金 Hei Jin-Black Gold.)

These two cupped their hands towards Han Li, and Han Li calmly returned the courtesy.

“This is Flying Lotus Cave’s Vagabond Hong Lian and Pu Lu Mountain’s Master Ku Sang.” This time, he pointed to the ordinary young lady and the small, bitter faced Buddhist monk.

(TL: 红莲 Hong Lian means Red Lotus.)

“As for them...”

“We are a married couple from Skywater Village, Hu Pinggu and Xiong Dali.” The Daoist priest had pointed to the young woman and that large bearded man who had not yet spoken. With a chuckle, the young woman quickly took over the conversation.

The Daoist priest wasn’t angry from being interrupted and calmly laughed instead.

“This humble Daoist is the Daoist Priest of Crouching Ox Mountain’s Young Ox Crown, Gua Shan. My Daoist name is ‘Qing Wen’. Hehe, this humble Daoist is this small group’s founder and current leader for the time being. However this humble Daoist cannot command anyone and only speaks first during external affairs!” The Daoist priest humbly introduced himself last and also gave the general characteristics of this small gang.

(TL: In this chapter, the Daoist priest was originally named Song Wen 松纹, but the author changes this to Qing Wen 青纹 in all later chapters.)

This Daoist priest also had quite a bit of bearing. This person didn’t seem bad at all!

In addition, the others’ magic power didn’t seem weak for the most part. Most of them had the magic power equivalent to the seventh to eighth stage of Eternal Spring Arts! This Daoist Priest Qing Wen was even more formidable. Although he hadn’t reached the level of the blue-clothed man, he was much stronger than Han Li.

After Han Li pondered for a moment, he felt that joining these people had many advantages with no disadvantages. He then said, “Since everyone is a rogue cultivator and group affairs are handled well, I, Han Li, would like to join you for the time being.

“Very good, Brother Han has joined. The strength of our group has increased yet again!” After Daoist priest Qing Wen heard Han Li’s words, he immediately replied in a cheerful tone.

The others had also revealed a happy expression. After all, Han Li’s magic powered seemed to be not weak and would be of no small assistance to them.

“Is our entire group here?” Han Li asked, currently looking left and right.

“There are still two more. One is currently sound asleep in a room. The other is strolling around.” Hu Pinggu curled his lip. It seemed he did not look at these two people particularly favorably.

“It isn’t as bad as Lady Hu says. One simply wanted to sleep for a bit, and the other wanted to have some fun!” The small Buddhist monk defended on behalf of the two people.

“You...” Hu Pinggu felt some discontent upon hearing Buddhist Monk Ku Sang words, and wanted to say a few other things.

“Enough! Everyone mustn’t argue. After all everyone had originally come to an agreement. Except for when we battle an external power, when we all must unite and follow orders. We all have freedom during all other times and can do as we wish!” Daoist Priest Qing Wen hastily stepped forward to mediate.

Although this Lady Hu did not appear outwardly happy, she did not pester and argue afterwards. After all, Daoist Priest Qing Wen’s strength was quite powerful, so she could not help but give him face.

“Wait until evening, then Brother Han will be able to meet with the two. I will give you an introduction at that time. Those two truly stand out from the masses!” The Daoist priest had a helpless appearance. It seemed the two were quite troublesome.

When Han Li saw this, although his interest was greatly piqued, he found it embarrassing to question this matter closely.

Next, Daoist Priest Qing Wen asked Han Li if he planned to move

together with them or stroll by himself.

Han Li naturally chose the latter, not surprising Daoist Priest Qing Wen. Because those who had just entered Great South Valley were naturally quite curious, they would for the most part favor moving alone. However, it would take about the same time for him to finish looking if they were to move together.

The Daoist priest was also quite conscientious. After telling Han Li a few taboo subjects and a few common conventions, making sure he understood the Great South Small Meeting completely, he gave Han Li a talisman.

He pointed to a pavilion's small bannered floor and told Han Li that the pavilion was where they were staying. The talisman he gave Han Li was a key to open the small floor's restraining technique, allowing Han Li to rest there when he were tired.

Afterwards these several people said their goodbyes to Han Li and disappeared from the dim light of night, leaving him not knowing whether they were continuing to look for other rogue cultivators.

Han Li continued to looked at the rear figures of these several people until they were already too far away to be seen. He then lowered his head to look at the talisman in his hand. There was a silver glisten on the yellow talisman. It was a talisman charm he was unable to make sense of. It seemed truly quite clever.

After Han Li muttered to himself for a moment, he softly smiled.

He folded the paper talisman and put it into his bosom. Then, after a deep look in the direction that Daoist Priest Qing Wen disappeared, he turned around and walked toward the plaza without the slightest hesitation.

After he entered the plaza, Han Li became like the other cultivators; he slowly walked on one side while turning his head to look at the goods of each and every vendor's stall.

According to what Daoist Priest Qing Wen had mentioned a moment

ago, these cultivator transactions generally used two methods.

The first method would be to exchange items for items. A few cultivators would trade a few goods they didn't need but were still hesitant to part with for goods that they urgently needed. As a result, those who set up a vendor stall would not have any successful transactions for several days. This was quite a common occurrence.

Chapter 131: Spirit Stones and Spirit Talisman

Another more popular method was to use something called “spirit stones” as a form of currency in business transactions among cultivators to buy and sell goods.

As the name implies, a “spirit stone” is a type of stone that was full of the world’s Spiritual Qi. The amount of Spiritual Qi accumulated in the spirit stone is a huge supplement for cultivators.

If a cultivator absorbed the Spiritual Qi within the spirit stone during mediation to practice a skill, his speed of cultivation would reach astonishing rates. After all, the scattered Spiritual Qi that a cultivator would have to absorb and refine by himself was quite different from having pure, refined Spiritual Qi next to him that he could absorb and refine as he wished.

However, this was not a spirit stone’s greatest effect. The most important usage of the spirit stone was for magic techniques and to set up a formation array.

Whether or not a high-grade formation array succeeded and was effective, it all depended upon the effectiveness of the spirit stone used. A good spirit stone would not only guarantee the success of the formation array, it would also increase the power dramatically.

However, the amount of spirit stones used for magic techniques was far above the utility of formation arrays. This was because a cultivator had to rely on his own magic power cultivation to determine the grade and effectiveness of the magic technique he wanted to execute. Since it was almost impossible to rely on oneself and use a high-grade magic technique, spirit stones became the best magic power amplification object.

If a cultivator cast a very powerful magic spell while holding a spirit stone in his hand, the Spiritual Qi within the spirit stone would

continuously replenish the cultivator's loss of magic power during magic casting. In this manner, it was able to support magic techniques one would originally be unable to use.

Therefore, the spirit stones had become the best option for cultivators to gain the upper hand and win from a position of weakness. They were also the best strength recovery tonic after magic power was greatly depleted, and would increase one's chances of survival during a fight by leaps and bounds.

Spirit stones have so many uses and amazing effects, so naturally, the value for a spirit stone rose as well.

But because of the vast consumption of the spirit stones, along with the excessive exploitation and continuous decline of their ore veins, spirit stones had gradually become a precious luxury good in the present day of the cultivating world. In short, it became a cultivator's optimal safeguard for business transactions and the only circulating monetary currency. Furthermore, there was even a collaborative decision on the detailed differentiation on a spirit stone's specifications and grade.

Spirit stones were grade into four grades according to the amount of spirit power they contained. The four grades comprised of low-grade spirit stone, mid-grade spirit stone, high-grade spirit stone and ultra-grade spirit stone. In addition, according to the different attribute of spirit power spirit stones stored, they could also be categorised into the five elements: Metal (金) spirit stone, Wood (木) spirit stone, Water (水) spirit stone, Earth (土) spirit stone, and Fire (火) spirit stone. Moreover, there are also rarely seen spirit stone attributes such as Wind (风) spirit stone and Thunder (雷) spirit stone. But those spirit stones were very rare.

These kind of extremely precious items like spirit stones, Han Li don't even possess a single piece of it.

He admitted that he did not have any sort of goods on him to use for an exchange. Hence from the start, he had intentions to widen his horizon, so he looked around without any restraint and continued his journey.

Even though Han Li's appearance was indifferent and calm, the items at

the vendors' stalls made his heart stir and greatly envious.

Ignoring the rest of the items, even the plain white talisman paper that every vending stall offered was subject to his attention. Despite the fact that this object was very common, it was currently what Han Li needed the most.

Even though Han Li still did not know the meaning of the level or grade of this talisman paper and what specific difference it had, he knew that with his present power, the elementary low-grade talisman paper was definitely enough for him to fully execute the Soul-Lock Talisman.

Therefore, if he could acquire a few talisman papers, he could immediately use one more type of magic spell, instantly increasing his strength quite a bit.

Of course other than the talisman paper, there was a rich variety of spirit talisman such as "Thunder Fire Talisman", "Fire Dragon Talisman", and the "Huge Force Talisman". All of these caused Han Li to be rather tempted.

While Han Li was still standing in front of an unassuming vendor's stall, he saw a spirit talisman that was exactly the same as the Daoist paper talisman that released a golden barrier, which he owned. Beside it, a signboard clearly wrote: "Guardian Talisman, metal elementary mid-grade defensive spirit talisman, worth nine low-grade spirit stones".

Han Li had shopped at many vending stalls, so he had come to understand the prices of these Daoist paper talisman. One low-grade spirit stone could buy a dozen elementary low-grade plain white talisman paper. But fully refined elementary low-grade Daoist paper talismans, depending on the different types of magic spell, were sold separately for two pieces of low-grade spirit stones.

As for the elementary mid-grade spirit talisman, promptly translating a few could sell for six to ten spirit stones. Moreover, defensive spirit talisman were more expensive than offensive spirit talisman.

As Han Li himself had the same type of object, he naturally wanted to take note of it.

After carefully examining stall's Guardian Talisman, Han Li discovered the other talisman's Spiritual Qi was much better than the one he kept in his bosom. It was clearly a new product that has not yet been used, but he reckoned that his worn and old product could only be sold at one third of its price at best.

Coming to this conclusion, Han Li laughed bitterly. It seemed that among cultivators, he was still a pauper. He couldn't help but to touch the article he had on him. Suddenly, he jolted when he remembered that he had a spirit talisman inscribed with a picture of a small sword in his bosom.

Although he still didn't know the name of the talisman, Han Li believed that this talisman was worthed more than the Guardian Talisman.

When he thought of this, Han Li began to pay close attention to every vendor, taking note to see whether the same Daoist paper talisman with the picture of a small sword was being sold.

Unfortunately, after going around so many stalls, he still did not see a similar product. Instead, at an area with five to six cultivators gathering around, Han Li found someone selling an elementary high-grade spirit talisman.

The signboard beside the spirit talisman wrote: "Soaring Sky Talisman, Wind-attribute elementary high-grade flying-type spirit talisman, price is at 30 low-grade spirit stone or exchange for consolidation-type pill medicine of equal value".

The moment Han Li saw the signboard, his heart was startled.

After going around many stalls, this was the first elementary high-grade spirit talisman that Han Li had seen. He couldn't help but to attentively view it. As expected, that spirit paper talisman's Spiritual Qi was astonishingly rich unlike all the previous low-grade and mid-grade spirit talisman he inspected in the other stalls.

A huge barefooted horsefaced man, who was standing around and viewing the talisman, was unable to restrain himself and asked, "20 pieces of spirit stones, are you willing to exchange?"

The stall's owner was a capable and vigorous youth. He used his hand and pointed to the signboard, then paid no heed to that person any longer.

"It's only a flying-type talisman. It's not even an offensive or defensive spirit talisman. 20 pieces is more than enough!" The horsefaced man made a bid mentioned, dissatisfied.

"Hmph! If it was really an offensive or defensive spirit talisman, you think I would still settle for only 30 pieces? If you don't have 50 pieces, I won't even let you have a look! If you want to benefit at the others' expense, go to other places! I don't welcome it here." The youth finally said coldly. But the moment he opened his mouth, he made the huge man's face turn entirely red.

"Good lad! I, Qin Yeling's Ye Bao, will remember you. After this gathering ends, let's compare skills with each other." The horsefaced huge man said exasperatedly.

(TL: 'Ye Bao' (叶豹) means 'Leaf Leopard')

"Qin Yeling." Originally Han Li was beaming happily as he viewed by the side, but after suddenly hearing the name of this place, he grew alarmed.

"Isn't that the birthplace of the dwarf I killed? Although the midget's words might not have been true, I must still be careful of this huge man who claims to be from the Ye Clan."

Thinking up until here, Han Li subconsciously retreated back a few steps, quietly left the area, and went to the next vendor. But he already kept in mind the exchange of consolidation-type pill medicine written on the signboard.

Han Li remembered that he still had a lot of unfinished Yellow Dragon Pellets and Gold Essence Pills, but he didn't know if those were the types of pills that the youth was requesting for. When there were less people around, he would go again and ask! If he was really successful, then he would have some capital and would be able to exchange for some necessary items.

After Han Li considered this, he turned his head to glance at the youth's stall and discovered that Ye Bao had unknowingly left to go somewhere else and was no longer there. Among the remaining people left, there was another person who fished out a bottle and handed it over to the youth.

The youth opened the bottle and smelled it a bit, but he then shook his head and returned the bottle to the owner. The owner of the bottle could only leave the place with a face full of regret. The others seemed to have come together with that person and also left shortly afterwards. Currently, there was no one in front of that stall.

Seeing this, Han Li was delighted and slowly returned to the front of the youth's stall. When the youth saw Han Li, he smiled distractedly, clearly recognising the person who came by once just now.

Han Li did not care that the youth laughed and said, "I have two types of medicine. Can we see if they are suitable for your request?"

After speaking, he took out two small porcelain bottles, one green and one blue, and placed it in front of the youth.

Instead of speaking nonsense, the youth reached his hand out to take the two porcelain bottles and opened the lid one by one. He then brought the bottle openings closer to his nose and smelled hard at both bottles separately. Afterwards, his face revealed a thoughtful expression.

The youth muttered to himself for a while and did not immediately return to normal. Instead he gently pushed the porcelain bottles towards Han Li.

"What is it?" Han Li blinked and asked.

"To tell you the truth, the pill medicines in both bottles were better than the ones I saw from the previous few people. But to me, they still not enough." The youth hesitated for a moment, but he still shook his head and refused.

Chapter 132: The Harvest

When Han Li heard this, he was greatly disappointed, but it also did not surprise him. After all, the Yellow Dragon Pellet and Gold Essence Pill were secular elixirs. To ordinary people these may be a miracle drugs, but to Immortal cultivators, these were indeed lacking.

Since the youth did not look up, Han Li also did not want to be long-winded, so he reached out to take the porcelain bottles back.

“Although these pill medicines are indeed lacking a bit, if you have more bottles, I will exchange with you!” The youth suddenly spoke, looking quite sympathetic.

After hearing the youth’s words, Han Li’s arm that was reaching out was immediately withdrawn. He laughed lightly.

“Did I say that I only have two medicinal bottles?” Han Li spoke slowly as he narrowed his eyes to focus on the youth.

“You have more?” The youth was slightly surprised, but he immediately revealed a cheerful expression.

“Of course, but if you want too many, I would still need to consider whether to agree with this transaction.” Han Li said noncommittally, as he was afraid that the youth might take advantage of the situation.

“That’s great! I don’t need a lot, just three bottles will do. It will be enough to allow me to break through the bottleneck in a short period of time.” The youth cheered up, appearing very passionate, which was very different from his previously cold demeanor.

This wasn’t surprising. Who would bear to part with any consolidation pill medicine that was able to boost cultivating effort? There wasn’t even enough to use on oneself! This was also the main reason why the youth had not exchanged the Soaring Sky Talisman these past few days.

Han Li’s Yellow Dragon Pellet and Gold Essence Pill were not considered top-notch spiritual medicine to Immortal cultivators, but thanks to the advantage of quantity, it was sufficient to allow the youth to break

through to the tenth layer after being stuck at the peak of ninth layer for so long, thus increasing the youth's power drastically.

However, only Han Li, a rascal who ate this type of medicine as mere snacks, could afford to use pill medicine for the exchange. Even so, Han Li was fully aware of the reason behind not exposing one's wealth. Han Li didn't want to the youth to have the impression that he could easily take out huge amounts of pill medicine without having any regrets.

Hence, Han Li touched his chin, making an appearance of pain as well as reluctance to part with his belongings.

"Is that so? Isn't it too many? I have to exchange all the medicine I have on me!" Han Li intentionally muttered softly.

"This isn't a lot! After all, this is an elementary high-grade spirit talisman. Think about it, if you had this spirit talisman with you, when you meet any dangers, you can immediately soar far into the sky. You can even fly faster than most of the birds. It's equivalent to having another chance to live! Furthermore, as long as the talisman's Spiritual Qi doesn't disperse, it can be used repeatedly many times. It is truly a useful spirit talisman!" The youth saw Han Li looking like he was going to give all his pill medicine, so he strongly promoted the advantages of his Soaring Sky Talisman and flourished the smile on his face even more, afraid that Han Li would be unwilling and back out of the transaction.

"If we want to exchange, then fine. Give me a dozen of those talisman papers as a treat. That book too!" Han Li added when saw that the youth really wanted his pill medicine, so he straightforwardly pointed at a dozen slips of plain white talisman paper and an old book titled "Manual of Basic Incantations".

The youth was shocked for a moment, but when he saw Han Li pointed to the low-rank talisman paper and an incantation book that was impossible to sell off, he was immediately delighted and agreed to it.

So this was how Han Li obtained Soaring Sky Talisman and even managed to acquire a dozen slips of talisman paper as well as the incantation book that he had his eye on from the very beginning.

Han Li flipped through the old book. In the book, there were all kinds of most basic elementary incantations, including seven to eight low-grade magic techniques and an elementary mid-grade “Earth Thrust Technique”.

To other Immortal cultivators, this kind of book was worthless, but it made Han Li extremely satisfied.

This was because Han Li was currently lacking in these types of basic incantation techniques. Even though the stall in front of him sold manuals that were better and more complete, their prices were astonishing.

One manual titled “Comprehensive Collection of Elementary Incantations of the Five Elements” was priced at 90 pieces of low-grade spirit stones, and another called “Fundamental Water Incantation Talisman Techniques” was priced at 60 pieces of low-grade spirit stones. Although all these books were thick and contained more incantation techniques, the current Han Li really couldn’t buy them at all.

(TL: “Five elements” refer to the 五行 Five Phases: Wood (木), Fire (火), Earth (土), Metal (金), and Water (水))

After obtaining these goods, Han Li felt a little tired and was not in the mood to continue strolling, so he directly exited the plaza and headed towards the pavilion.

Not long after leaving the plaza, Han Li turned his head to look and discovered that there were even more people within the plaza. It seemed like there were many of those night owl-like Immortal cultivators who preferred the nighttime.

When Han Li got closer to these palace-type buildings, he discovered that the towers were actually built using extremely precious paulownia wood and large pieces of limestone. Not only was every floor carved with a picture of dragons and phoenix and was very refinedly constructed, there was even a faint fluctuation of spirit power coming from one of the nearby towers. Perhaps it was the restraining technique that Daoist Priest Qing Wen mentioned.

Han Li walked around for a lap, and after finally finding the pavilion he was looking for, he walked towards it.

But about three meters away from his destination, Han Li suddenly felt like he slammed into something after an invisible immense force abruptly pushed him and forcibly forced him to retreat far back.

Han Li was somewhat startled yet excited. It appeared that there was a lot of things he still didn't know about in the cultivation world, and he desperately wanted to learn everything.

As Han Li thought about this, his heart beat faster. He used the Heaven's Eye Technique and gazed towards the small building.

In the end, Han Li saw a faint layer of green light in front of him, obstructing the way. The whole pavilion was covered in the same green light, as if a huge bowl had been overthrown and was covering it.

Han Li stepped forward once again, extended a finger, and lightly jabbed the green light. There was a soft and extremely elastic feeling. Using a bit more strength, there was a faint force that bounced back. The defense power of the green light was quite effective.

Since Han Li managed to understand the effect of the green light, he stopped investigating it. He took out the talisman that Daoist Priest Qing Wen gave him and walked closer towards the light screen. In the end, the green coloured light screen immediately cleared away in ripples. A round hole soon appeared for Han Li to pass through.

Han Li kept the talisman properly and strided in unceremoniously towards the tower. At this moment, the round hole slowly became smaller until it finally closed fully, returning the light screen back to its normal appearance.

The tower in front was not considered to be very big. There were only two stories and was about 33 meters tall. But from the looks of the area of the land, there was plenty of space to spare for ten or more people to live.

Han Li smiled and lifted his leg to enter the building. Upon entering the first floor's hall, other than the two large eight-seat square table, there

were ten wooden chairs with simple and elegant upholstery. There was even a few Immortal cultivators.

The small Buddhist Monk Ku Sang was sitting on the floor at the corner of the hall with his head lowered. His eyes were shut and he was chanting Sanskrit, looking like he was a senior monk. As for the other people, Han Li has not seen them before.

“Master Ku Sang, is Daoist Priest Qing Wen not back yet?” Han Li asked politely as he walked towards the Buddhist monk.

The small Buddhist monk paid no heed to Han Li and continued to mutter some words, until Han Li became impatient with waiting. The Buddhist monk opened his eyes and said to Han Li with a look of apology, “Almsgiver Han, please do not blame me. I was reciting the Diamond Sutra up to a crucial point, so I was unable to reply to your question immediately. Please do not get mad at me!”

Han Li heard the Buddhist monk’s reply and laughed dryly, “How is that possible? I admire focused people the most.”

Hearing Han Li say that, the small Buddhist monk laughed and leisurely said. “Daoist Priest Qing Wen and the others are currently waiting for Almsgiver Han at the second floor. They instructed me to immediately tell you to go up once I saw you. It seems like they are looking for Almsgiver for some matters.”

(TL: 施主 Almsgiver or benefactor is a traditional way buddhist monks address others.)

Han Li became somewhat gloomy when he heard this.

Really! Even though there were people looking for Han Li, this small Buddhist monk not only failed to immediately tell Han Li, he was still so slow and long-winded. In the future, it would be better to be further away from the same type of people as the small Buddhist monk. The further the better!

Han Li silently cursed in his heart, but his face remained unchanged as he nodded his head. He walked towards nearby stairs in the hall and

headed up to the second floor.

Upon entering the second floor, Han Li saw the two brothers Hei Mu and Hei Jin talking at the stairway entrance. Once they saw Han Li coming up, they quickly stopped their conversation and welcomed Han Li.

“Brother Han, Daoist Priest Qing Wen is currently waiting for you in the house. Follow both of us brothers to go over there!” Han Li’s expression was calm, and he did not utter a single word. He followed the two brothers around seven to eight turns along the corridor and entered a house.

There were many people in the house. Apart from the Buddhist monk, everyone else was here. There were even two strangers that Han Li did not recognise.

One of them was a 16 to 17 year-old youth, and the other was a 21 to 22 year-old fatty with fair skin. It seemed that these two were the rascals that even caused a headache for Daoist Priest Qing Wen.

“Brother Han is here! Quickly sit!” Daoist Priest Qing Wen said to Han Li as he very politely pointed to a chair beside him.

Han Li nodded and sat there.

“These two people are Yunmen Ravine’s Wu Jiuzhi and Shitou Valley’s Huang Xiaotian,” Qing Wen pointed to the youth and fatty separately and introduced them to Han Li.

(TL: 九指 (Jiuzhi) means nine fingers. 孝天 (Xiaotian) means filial piety, sky/heaven)

Chapter 133: Thieving Skills

“Aiya! I am Wu Jiuzhi. As soon as I saw Brother, I felt particularly familiar. Could it be we were brought together by the karma between our previous incarnations? Come! Let us later drink some wine and become sworn brothers!”

As soon as Daoist Priest Qing Wen had finished speaking, this happily smiling chap suddenly scurried over and threw himself in front of Han Li. He extended a hand to firmly grasp Han Li’s arm and then said these words with a face of deep emotion.

Han Li was initially startled, but soon after he softly smiled.

“It’s not that we can’t be brothers, but can you not touch my body so casually with your hand? My tastes are quite ordinary, I have no interest in beautiful pure young men at all!”

Han Li mockingly said with a slight smile. An arm was suddenly raised into the air and turned over by Han Li; it was grabbed by the wrist as quick as lightning. This wrist had already been secretly extended halfway into Han Li’s front jacket.

“Cough, cough! This is truly strange. How did my hand run off into Brother’s bosom? It was definitely impatient to greet Brother Han once I saw him!” The youth separated from Han Li on the spot. First he blushed with a surprised complexion, but after a few dry coughs and a few murmurs, he slowly withdrew his hand as if nothing had happened.

Han Li did have any intention of holding back the youth’s wrist. When the youth used force, Han Li had voluntarily let go.

At this time, Han Li had actually grew quite an interest toward this Wu Jiuzhi. He was obviously a cultivator but he uses the thieving skills of a person from Jiang Hu. This pickpocketing of his was truly quite interesting.

However, his technique was quite excellently practiced. Were it not Han Li but another cultivator, they would perhaps be truly unaware of his

dirty trick. Surely quite a few people in this room had already suffered from his antics!

Just as Han Li thought this, he heard Hu Pinggu's schadenfreude-laced voice.

"Boy Wu, have you met your match? Brother Han actually caught you at the scene. Are you going to continue boasting that your thieving skills are top notch with these petty thefts of yours?"

"What about it? This young master is satisfied. You want me to steal from you one more time? What haven't I stolen? You don't have anything of the slightest value from head to toe. What have you come to Great South Meeting for?" Wu Jiuzhi harshly said, curling his lip.

"What did you say, brat!? Did I not yet settle your debt the last time you stole from me?" Hu Pinggu suddenly jumped from her chair with an ashen complexion.

In addition, her fully bearded husband, though he did not say anything, had his hand on the broadsword behind his back with eyes glaring at the youth. Han Li would later find out this Xiong Dali was actually a mute and therefore relied on his wife for all his affairs.

"Enough! We are all cultivators and should remain amiable. You two back down. Do not argue again." When Daoist Priest Qing Wen saw this, he wrinkled his brow. However, after the words of conciliations were said, he solemnly said toward Jiuzhi, "Brother Wu, I know your thefts are only for fun, but you must return the objects to their owner every time. You mustn't have malicious intention. However, if you continue to do this, you will provoke disaster sooner or later. Not all of your victims will be easy to deal with. If you were to offend somebody from a cultivator clan, it wouldn't be that we wouldn't want to help but rather that we simply couldn't. That is why you shouldn't pull these kinds of pranks anymore!"

When the youngster heard Daoist Priest Qing Wen's heartfelt words, he could not help but feel embarrassed. He scratched the back of his head and sincerely mentioned, "Actually on the journey to the Great South Valley, I accidentally obtained these thieving skills. But because I found it

amusing, I could not help but practice it subconsciously on everyone. However, since this Brother Han could defeat this little brother, others at the great assembly should be much more difficult to deal with. That's why everyone should feel relieved since this little brother will not play with his life and will not use his stealing skills at the great assembly."

When the Daoist priest heard the youngster's words, his face showed an overjoyed expression.

"Brother Wu's talent is quite outstanding. At this age, he's already trained to the great circle of eighth layer. He is the true genius among us cultivators. It's better that he behaves himself this way."

"This Little Brother will not let down Daoist Priest Qing Wen's expectations. I request that everyone will better take care of me in the future!" Wu Jiuzhi gave a deep salute to everyone individually. After doing so, the hatred towards him was resolved.

Although Hu Pinggu face still had a somewhat angry expression, her complexion was much better than before. It seemed she had reluctantly accepted his goodwill.

Daoist Priest Qing Wen turned his head over and said to Han Li with a smile, "I didn't think that Brother Han who had just joined us would immediately perform such a great service. This humble Daoist wishes to thank you!"

Han Li faintly smiled and declined with a soft voice, "What does this have to do with me? This matter was completely handled by Daoist Priest!"

The Daoist priest shook his head with a smile and spoke no further. However, at this moment, the drone of an indistinct voice sounded out.

"Daoist Priest, for what did you call us all over? Why doesn't this Buddhist monk join in?"

It turned out to be the fair skinned fatty had uttered these words.

However, this man was actually qualified to speak to Qing Wen in this manner.

Han Li have been long aware that among them, the fatty had the greatest magic power, deeper than that of Qing Wen. That was why no one dare to mock the fatty's coarse words. Even that Wu Jiuzhi had a deadpan appearance and didn't show the slightest bit of difference.

'It seems this world of cultivators is just about the same as the secular Jiang Hu. Only those possessing strength will be respected!' Han Li thought as he saw this jeer.

"Hehe! Brother Huang is quite an impatient person! Very well, this humble Daoist will reveal the reason why he has called all of you here." Qing Wen waved his horsetail whisk and said without the slightest trace of anger.

"The Great South Meeting has already passed half of its duration. It will be concluded in ten days. Shouldn't everyone conclude their business? If you want to setup a vendor's stall, then it would be best if we do it together. That is why I sought to discuss this with everyone. As for Master Ku Sang, he already finished exchanging the items he brought. Therefore he needn't again participate in this discussion."

'So it was like that. I should indeed exchange some items for a few spirit stones and buy a few other items!' The people in the room started to whisper.

After a lively discussion, everyone except Han Li expressed interest in setting up a street vendor's stall the next day.

"Brother Han does not wish to participate?" Wu Jiuzhi asked, somewhat amazed.

The others also looked toward Han Li with doubt.

"I initially only brought a few items with me. Last night, I happened to meet a few appropriate customers and already finished exchanging everything! That is why I don't plan to participate with you." With a calm look, Han Li indifferently explained.

"So it's like that! You really don't need to be bothered with us! Brother Han is truly fortunate to have finished exchanging his items after just

arriving.” Hu Pinggu mentioned somewhat enviously.

The others also shot Han Li an envious “You are truly lucky” look.

After Han Li heard this, he smiled and spoke no further.

Daoist Priest Qing Wen saw that business discussions were finished. He happily stood and said, “We should all rest well tonight and wake up spirited tomorrow. I hope you will all earn good profits!”

Once everyone heard this, they also stood and smiled, preparing to leave.

At this time, Daoist Priest Qing Wen seemed to have remembered something. His expression suddenly turned serious, and he said to everyone, “By the way, after the Great South Meeting finishes, everyone shouldn’t depart by themselves! I heard that after the past few Great South Meetings ended, a few rogue cultivators such as ourselves disappeared without a trace. It would be better to be a bit more careful! It can be assumed that who is involved would not miss the opportunity to attend the Great Tian Wutai Immortal Ascension Assembly! Everyone should stay together to enhance their safety!”

After everyone heard the Daoist priest say rogue cultivators had gone missing, the Hei Brothers and Hu Pinggu’s faces paled. Rogue cultivators Hong Lian and Wu Jiuzhi were bewildered. Fatty Huang Xiaotian coldly snorted with a gloomy expression.

“Right. Us brothers approve of Daoist Priest Qing Wen’s words. It would be better to stay together as a group.”

“As a married couple, we do not disagree!”

Both the Hei Brothers and Hu Pinggu with her husband agreed. It seemed they were greatly fearful toward this matter.

Chapter 134: Great Immortal Ascension Assembly

“Now is not the time to talk about some Immortal Ascension Assembly. The topic we should be discussing right now is regarding the issue of our fellow cultivators going missing.” Hu Pinggu said somewhat resentfully towards the youth.

“It’s not a problem. Give Brother Wu a proper explanation. Maybe there are others who are unclear of the details about the Immortal Ascension Assembly.” Daoist Priest Qing Wen said with a smile, but Han Li felt that he was intentionally looking at Han Li.

Han Li’s heart trembled with fear, could it be that Daoist Priest Qing Wen saw through something? Han Li already tried his best to hide characteristics of a new Immortal cultivator and even go as far as to avoid touching certain people. But nowadays, it seemed that it was still unable to be conceal from these certain people’s eyes. This Daoist Priest Qing Wen’s eyes were definitely really fierce.

“Since Daoist Priest Qing Wen said it like that, then I better explain it properly to Brother Wu!” Seeing this, Hei Mu’s spirits were lifted, and he looked like he had a lot to say.

So everyone returned to their original seats once again, except for Fatty Huang Xiaotian.

“I already know about the Great Immortal Ascension Assembly. I will return to rest first, you guys go ahead.”

Fatty said with a cold expression. He did not wait for anyone else to speak and left the house, leaving behind a house full of people looking at each other in dismay.

“Everyone, don’t take offense. Brother Huang’s cultivation art is a bit weird, and he is relatively addicted to sleep. It is not that he intentionally treats people coldy!” Qing Wen, with irreproachable manners, hurriedly exonerated Huang Xiaotian on his behalf.

The majority of the people in the room who heard this all laughed bitterly. Take offense? Who dared to take offense? That person was a powerful man who had more magic power than the Daoist priest!

The atmosphere in the room became somewhat awkward.

“Brother Hei Mu, please continue!” Wu Jiuzhi broke the atmosphere as he urged on.

Hei Mu heard it and laughed, then continued to talk about it.

“When talking about Great Immortal Ascension Assembly, one must mention the Foundation Establishment Pill, the medicine pill that makes all the Qi Condensation stage cultivators go mad.....”

As it turned out, if every Qi Condensation Immortal cultivator were to enter Foundation Establishment and become a part of the true cultivating world, aside from cultivating their foundation building cultivation techniques the the seventh layer, they still needed to take the spiritual medicine, “Foundation Establishment Pill”, that only major sects could manufacture. Only then would there be hope of breaking through the bottleneck of that realm and succeed into Foundation Establishment.

This contributed to Foundation Establishment Pill’s famous name “Immortal Ascension Pill”, making those Immortal Cultivators go mad.

Even in the Immortal cultivator major factions, the Foundation Establishment Pill was in critically short shortage.

Because the Foundation Establishment Pill’s raw materials were extremely hard to find, even if all the cultivators’ sects throughout the entire state of Yue collaborated and acted together to provide materials and great effort every ten years, they could only hope to make a few new cauldron medicine pills, about one thousand measly pieces.

But even if all these medicine pills were to be divided equally among every faction, there would be no way to satisfy their own needs. As a result, the Foundation Establishment Pill never appeared outside the world of cultivators.

However, in the cultivating world of the entire state of Yue, there were

still a lot of existing cultivators who practiced their foundation building techniques until the seventh layer. These people were in urgent need of Foundation Establishment Pills to attempt to break through the bottleneck.

Thus, on one hand, because of the shortage of Foundation Establishment Pills, the big sects had monopolized the medicine pill. On the other hand, there was an increasing number of rogue Immortal cultivators that were in need of Foundation Establishment Pills but could not find a single piece in the outside world. There were already conflicting views from both sides very early on. So much so that at one time, there was deep animosity from short-tempered minor Immortal cultivators towards these sects.

Those from the major Immortal cultivator factions naturally became aware of the poor outlook of the situation, but they couldn't do anything about it for the time being. After all, they didn't have enough Foundation Establishment Pill for themselves, so how could they take out some and give them to outsiders!

But in this whole world, there were no difficult problems that couldn't be solved. Eventually in this crisis, there was an unknown genius from a sect who solved it.

Unexpectedly, he thought an idea. Every time there were freshly manufactured Foundation Establishment Pills, major sects would pick out outstanding rogue cultivators from the outside world, allow them to join the major sects, and give them the Foundation Establishment Pill to consume.

This way, the sects could stem the outflow of Foundation Establishment Pill, thereby preventing manure water from flowing to other fields. This also eliminated the dissatisfaction of minor Immortal cultivators. After all, to be able to join one of the major Immortal cultivator factions, how could these cultivators not be content? The factions could even pick out disciples who have outstanding aptitudes. It truly was a good situation that could satisfy everyone.

(TL: 肥水不流外人田 lit: don't let one's own fertile water flow into others' field , keep the valuables within the family)

But the method of selection must be fair and strict to prevent any disputes caused by gossips. If not, there would be an opposite effect.

Hence, the sects would choose their elites and use arena-style combat to let newcomers strive for the chance to enter their sects.

Each of the seven major sects would take ten disciples and ten pieces of Foundation Establishment Pills to award the final victors.

Naturally, they would set an age limit. Anyone above forty years old would not be allowed to enter. Even though these people may have good aptitudes, their future prospects in cultivation would not be good.

This was how Great Immortal Ascension Assembly was born!

The majority of the people who were able to obtain victory in the arena were those with profound magic power as well as talented individuals with aptitudes surpassing others, making those Immortal cultivator sects very pleased to obtain these excellent quality disciples.

All the grievances of the other Immortal cultivators disappeared after the establishment of this Great Assembly. All their attention was focused on the once-in-a-decade opportunity to make a big break.

Thus, the Great Immortal Ascension Assembly was organised in this way. And every time there would be 70 lucky winners who became disciples of the seven major sects, making other Immortal cultivators go even more frantic.

At the end, almost all of the Immortal cultivators who were of an appropriate age and were in the Qi Condensation stage felt that they are no weaker than their peers. They would go all out and try a few times to fight on the arena, hoping to gain an unexpected success and transform from a carp into a dragon.

But this arena was not easy to beat since magic was not easy to control for these second-rate Immortal cultivators. Each assembly would have a lot of dead or injured casualties, which also created intense rancor among

the challengers.

Hei Mu spent half a day talking about this. Qu Jiuzhi, who was listening with keen interest, gained a lot from this. Han Li, who was sitting beside and listening in, benefited even more from this lecture and had a deeper understanding towards the world of cultivators.

“If I were to succeed, would I also be able to become a disciple of a major sect?” After listening, Wu Jiuzhi’s face was full of yearning.

“Are you dreaming? With your level, you would be dead if you tried to rush and grind even if you weren’t injured!” Hu Pinggu ridiculed without restraint when she heard Wu Jiuzhi’s words of reverie.

“Oh, why can’t I do it? Even though I my cultivation art is at the eighth layer, do I not have qualifications to get on the arena and fight?” This time, Wu Jiuzhi did not get angry, and instead he consulted with Hu Pinggu.

Hu Pinggu was somewhat shocked, but after hesitating for a while, he said, “Wu, lad, do you know what kind of people were the past year’s 70 winners? And how many cultivators, who were of similar caliber as yourself, were injured or dead?”

“I hope Lady Hu would be so kind as to give me a reply.” Wu Jiuzhi replied rather sincerely.

“I witnessed the previous Great Immortal Ascension Assembly’s entire battle, and there’s still some lingering fear when I think about it.” It was as if Hu Pinggu remembered something very frightening, as her complexion turned paler.

When her fully bearded husband saw this, he immediately placed his hand on her shoulder to comfort her. Hu Pinggu turned her head and lovingly looked at her husband, her complexion easing up.

“Both of us don’t want to participate in the single-elimination open tournament, only to look. We are prepared to stay in Qi Condensation forever. Since you all still have ambitious goals, then let me tell you some cruel aspects of the tournament. Otherwise, you else will die without ever

knowing what happened to you.” Hu Pinggu said indifferently.

Chapter 135: Frightening News

“First of all, those registering in the competition must have achieved the seventh layer of their Five Elements foundation establishment technique. This requires taking Foundation Establishment Pills at the very least. Secondly, their age must be less than forty. Those surpassing this age shouldn’t even think of slipping through because those in charge of the great assembly’s registrations are able to use bone observation techniques to look at every participant’s true age.”

(TL: “Five Elements” 五行 Five Phases: Wood (木), Fire (火), Earth (土), Metal (金), and Water (水))

“So long as one follows those two conditions, then anyone can register. There are no other restrictions! As a result, however, these open single elimination tournaments become even more desperate!”

“You think that the many people here at Great South Valley are ordinary? The majority of those here actually came here for the Immortal Ascension Assembly. It should be known that the Great South Meeting was originally but a trade meet for the local young cultivators of the Lan Province. During meetings in previous years, there were only several hundred people! Take a look. As of now this valley has at least a thousand people. In addition, people that come from even farther regions will arrive one after another during the last few days. During that time, the business of the Great South Meeting will be at its highest level.”

“These people are the reason why we’ve come to participate in the Great South Meeting early. On one hand, we wish to exchange for a few necessary goods. On the other, how could one not want take advantage of this opportunity? First, one may observe potential opponents of the Immortal Ascension Assembly. It is good to not only know ourselves but also know our enemies!” Hu Pinggu added with a bitter smile.

When Wu Jiuzhi heard this, his complexion greatly changed, and he aghastly said, “According to Lady Hu, there were experts in the valley that cultivated to the tenth layer in their cultivation technique. Will they also

participate in the Immortal Ascension Assembly? What is there to compete in? Aren't those with lower cultivation courting death?"

"This might not be certain. Who said that higher tier experts would always beat those of lower tiers? Even if their magic power is slightly weaker, they can use a somewhat more powerful magic talisman or use some formidable magic tool that they're carrying to beat down those with greater magic power." From those who originally entered the room, Hei Jin, who had yet to speak, suddenly spoke out boldly, shocking everyone in the room!

"That's right, what Brother Hei Jin said makes sense. In a war of cultivators such as ourselves, the slightest deepness or shallowness of one's magic power is not most important. What is most important is one's control of their magic might and its agile usage as well as the power they can draw from items they are carrying!" Daoist Priest Qing Wen said, completely agreeing.

"Brother Hei Jin and Daoist Priest Qing Wen's words must indeed hold some truth, otherwise this Great Immortal Ascension Assembly need not convene at all. They would only have to compare the depth of their magic power." Hu Pinggu smiled.

After hearing Hei Jin and the others' words, Wu Jiuzhi still wasn't happy. With a brow of worry and a face on the verge of tears, he incessantly muttered, "Formidable magic tools... powerful magic talismans...."

Hu Pinggu didn't take notice of Wu Jiuzhi at this time but instead continued, saying, "Because there are too many people participating in the single elimination tournament, there will be seven stages setup at the Immortal Ascension Assembly, representing the seven great cultivation sects of the State of Yue. Whoever wishes to become that sect's disciple, can advance onto the stage to compete. The match selection uses an instant win policy. Two people will compete, the winner will stay for next stage, and the loser will be immediately eliminated. Then another two will have a match. This will continue until everyone competes once. Then they will start the next stage of the competition, which will continue until

the final ten remain. These ten will become the cultivation sects' inner disciples and need not to participate in the sect's greatly intense competition to obtain the qualifications to receive Foundation Establishment Pills. It could be said to have reached the heavens with a single step! The course of the Great Immortal Ascension Assembly tournament were as such. However, it is not as simple as I have said. In reality, the matches are a desperate sight to behold and are simply indescribable." After Hu Pinggu said this, she let out a sorrowful sigh.

"I remember that in the fights from the last competition, there were nineteen tenth layer cultivators who died. Even a couple of eleventh layer experts also met the same end by mutually taking one another down! As for ninth and eighth layer cultivators, those who died during the match were much greater in number. No less than a hundred had died. After all, in the final several rounds, there would be no one that would lightly renounce their path to become a dragon. The number of dead and injured then would be even more tremendous." Having said this, Hu Pinggu had an expression of regret.

"When one's foundation establishment technique reaches the eleventh layer, do they still have to go compete in a match? I've heard people say that cultivation sects voluntarily recruit these sort of outstanding talents. Why did those two people have to fight in a match as if their life depended on it!" A woman's voice suddenly spoke. It was actually the habitually silent young woman, Vagabond Hong Lian, that had spoken.

When Hu Pinggu heard her words, she smiled.

"I also had the same question as Young Sister Hong Lian during that particular year. I was completely puzzled despite a great amount of pondering. Afterwards, I met an old senior that was a rogue cultivator like us. His explanation allowed me to realize why!"

"Brother Wu and Brother Han, it seems you also have this question!"

"They are not the only ones who don't understand. Us two brothers also don't understand. Tenth layer geniuses have a well lit path that they do not walk. Why would they possibly want to insist on walking a small

wooden plank? A moment of distraction will cause one's death!" Hei Mu also tensed his brow with a face of puzzlement.

"I see Daoist Priest Qing Wen is calm and composed. He probably figured this out already. How about Daoist Priest come and explain it to them?" Hu Pinggu chuckled several times and lightly threw the question toward the Daoist priest.

This somewhat surprised Daoist Priest Qing Wen but he immediately and silently conceded. After muttering to himself for a moment, he said, "Actually, those two were from cultivator clans. Their eleventh layer cultivation was the result of consuming many medicinal pills." He shook his head, seemingly disapproving of the two's methods.

"Is using medical pills to promote their cultivation level not a normal thing? They should still be able to join a cultivation sect!" Wu Jiuzhi widely opened his eyes, somewhat unconvinced.

"Brother Wu forgot one thing. Those who are above forty and have practiced to the eleventh layer in their cultivation technique may be considered geniuses by us, but those ancient great sects see those people as having merely common talents. They would barely qualify to enter the sect as a reserve disciple. Otherwise, these people would have entered the large cultivation sects at an earlier time when they were younger as official disciples. It's just that their clan members felt that being able to barely enter a cultivation sect as such would have no future prospects. Therefore, they agreed to not compete against those disciples more talented than themselves for the qualifications to obtain Foundation Establishment Pills and simply stayed behind for closed-door cultivation. After several tens of years later, they would simply come out to the Immortal Ascension Assembly to amaze the world in a single feat and immediately acquire the qualifications to obtain a Foundation Establishment Pill through a shortcut. However, their clan hadn't expected that two with the same plan would coincidentally come across one another, resulting in mutual destruction. Were it not for that, their wishes were certain to have been fulfilled."

While Daoist Priest Qing Wen said this, he incessantly sighed. Everyone

had attentively listened from the beginning.

“I’ve said that recent Immortal Ascension Assemblies have grown more and more intense. Eleventh and tenth layer experts previously unheard of have appeared one after another.” Hei Mu muttered to himself.

Young Lady Hong Lian and Wu Jiuzhi were shocked silent. It was clear that this information had greatly surprised them.

“Think about it. On one side there are great experts meticulously nurtured and fully armed by cultivator clans. On the other hand, there are us: destitute rogue cultivators. Do you think us rogue cultivators are more likely to succeed?”

Hu Pinggu’s expression was cold with slight self-deprecation!

“According to what was said, those cultivation sects obtain the disciples they want through the Great Immortal Ascension Assembly. It is an overjoyous yet phoney affair. Are we slapping our own face to look big and imposing?” Han Li stroked his nose, seemingly in thought.

“Brother Han isn’t wrong. In this world, what is three parts completely beautiful and good? Having two parts beautiful is good enough!” Hu Pinggu threw a glance at Hei Mu, making him faintly blush.

“Could it be us rogue cultivators are truly inferior to disciples of cultivator clans? Even those leftovers from the cultivator sects are that much stronger than us common rogue cultivators.”

“Although I don’t want to admit it, the odds of a master emerging from us rogue cultivators are far lower than that from the cultivator clans. Let alone a single one of us, all of our manpower and resources can not be compared to ours. The conditions outside of a sect are far too lacking when compared!” Daoist Qing Wen added somewhat bitterly.

“I’ve also heard from a friend that even if we were to luckily become a disciple of a cultivator sect and consumed a Foundation Establishment Pill, the number of those successful in achieving Foundation Establishment is far too low!” Hei Mu said dejectedly.

“Enough, everyone don’t be crestfallen! We are still young. If we are

unsuccessful this time, we still have an opportunity in ten years! Perhaps in the future we will enter a cultivator clan as a disciple! For now, let's talk about how we will gather together after the assembly!"

After Daoist Priest Qing Wen let everyone blow off steam, he changed the subject.

"There is nothing to say. At that time, I will leave with everyone. After hearing about how amazing the people of the world of Immortal cultivators are, I truly wouldn't dare to travel by myself."

Daoist Priest Qing Wen helplessly shook his head and looked toward Vagabond Hong Lian.

Chapter 136: Yan Clan

“I will also travel with everyone.” Vagabond Hong Lian declared quite bluntly.

“Good, good! Brother Han, do you also plan go with us as well?” Daoist Priest Qing Wen had a happy appearance and then asked Han Li.

When Han Li heard this, he hesitated.

It would be reasonable to say that for a young person like him, it would be best to follow this small group. However he didn't know why, but in his heart, he felt that something wasn't right. Had he truly made that decision, he was certain to regret it.

“I will decide after the conclusion of the trade meet! I am not anxious!” Han Li said with a smile. He decided to first wait a bit before making a decision.

“Yi!?” Han Li's words clearly went against their expectations and shocked everyone.

“For what reason does Brother Han hesitate? Us rogue cultivators are together so that others can't bully us. What's even more is that Brother Han was able to see through my thieving skills. This little brother has much interest in swapping pointers with you at a later date!” Wu Jiuzhi said somewhat dissatisfied.

After Han Li heard the youth's words, he did not get angry. He only smiled and spoke no more.

“Hehe. Brother Han didn't say that he was certain to not get along with us on the journey. He simply said that he wanted to think about it. That too is only natural!” Daoist Priest Qing Wen immediately mediated.

“That's right. Daoist Priest Qing Wen spoke the words in my mind. I have a few secret problems that are truly somewhat difficult to say. That is why I must be a bit cautious.” Han Li seemed to be very grateful towards Daoist Priest Qing Wen and gave an expression that he was speaking from his heart.

“So it was like that. I am being mettlesome!” The youth felt as if he had become ostracized and became displeased.

Daoist Priest Qing Wen helplessly smiled. With the look of an elder brother apologizing for a mischievous little brother, he inwardly apologized to Han Li.

Han Li naturally did not take this matter to heart.

Since this matter had already been resolved, everyone stood up one after another and took their leave. Han Li looked for an empty room on the second floor to retire for the night.

On the second day, except for Han Li and the Buddhist monk, everyone else left the building and went together to the vendor stands.

At this moment, the Buddhist monk was in the hall of the first floor meditating and chanting scriptures. Han Li was in his room, lightly stroking a dozen paper talismans and lost in thought.

“These so-called elementary low-grade paper talismans have a slight flicker of spiritual light. They’re largely different from the paper talismans of the secular world, not because the materials are special but rather due to the addition of some kind of magic technique.” Han Li thought.

Han Li took out the paper talismans, which he originally planned to use in order to learn the Soul-Lock Technique. However, he suddenly remembered he couldn’t seem to draw the Soul-Lock Talismans on the bright side. He still needed a writing brush and cinnabar sand, two items that seemed to be sold at vendor stalls. Could it be that these paper talismans couldn’t be used in conjunction with secular objects and were limited to items unique to cultivators?

With this thought, Han Li could not sit still in the room, so he decided to go find the Buddhist monk. In any case, he wouldn’t be able to hide the fact he was a novice cultivator. He may as well calmly and directly ask.

“Almsgiver’s thoughts are correct. To successfully draft a spiritual talisman, apart from having to refine the talisman paper from special

materials, you also must use a concoction of demonic beast blood and cinnabar. As for the writing brush, it depends on the situation!" After Buddhist Monk Ku Sang heard Han Li's question, he peacefully answered.

(TL: 施主 Almsgiver is a title that Buddhist monks traditionally address others by.)

"Master Ku Sang, what do you mean that it depends on the situation?" Han Li earnestly asked, sitting across the monk. His appearance didn't hold the slightest amount of shame.

"Most of the brushes cultivators use to draft spiritual talismans, apart from those created from the spiritual hair from demonic beasts, are made of heavenly bestowed precious earthly charcoal. These can increase the rate of success when creating talismans as well as the talisman's might. However, if you do not have them, you can even use common secular brushes, but if you do, the rate of success is far too pitiful." The Buddhist monk lightly shook his head. He seemed to disapprove of Han Li using that last method to refine talismans.

"Many thanks for Master's instructions. I will go out to see whether I can exchange for a brush to make talismans!" Han Li stood and cupped his fist towards the Buddhist monk.

"Almsgiver, take care!" The Buddhist monk closed his eyes once more and continued the great undertaking of his meditation.

It seemed he would have to go out today! He remembered that the brush and cinnabar were not inexpensive. It would cost approximately six or seven low-grade spirit stones. Could it be that he would have to sell the flight talisman he had barely been able to acquire?

Han Li thought this as he walked. People were also exiting the building and walked over to the marketplace.

Since it was currently morning, cultivators on the road were grouped in two and threes and were not at all lonely. However, they seemed to all be heading toward the marketplace. It appeared that the majority of them were like his own group, heading out to set up a vendor's stall.

“Quick, look! A huge bird!” A male cultivator suddenly cried out in alarm.

Soon after, a large shadow swept across the road Han Li and other cultivators were treading.

Han Li was quite startled and hastily raised his head to look.

He saw a two-headed monstrous bird about the size of a calf, flying past over him.

This bird somehow seemed to resemble an eagle and also something else entirely. Grey feathers covered its entire body. Its wings were seven feet wide, and it possessed a pair of sharp sickle-like claws. Above the two neck were two bald, fierce bird heads with four eyes that glowed with a green light.

What a frightening demonic bird!

“How unsightly!”

“How large!”

“Quickly capture it, it would make a great mount!”

.....

The cultivators below stopped one after another and started to talk. It seemed that there were even a few eager to try to capture it.

“You don’t value your lives! That is the ‘Two-Headed Duck’ a spiritual bird raised by the number one cultivator clan, Guyu Mountain’s Yan Clan. It’s certain to have a member of the Yan Clan riding on it. Are you looking to bring about your own destruction?”

These ice cold words woke up a few from their beautiful dreams.

“Yan Clan? One of the large cultivation sects, the cultivator clan that hold Core Formation experts in reserve?” Someone cried out.

“What other Yan Clan is there? I came here a bit earlier and already saw the Two-Headed Duck. I also found out that a brother and sister from the Yan Clan are participating in the Great Immortal Ascension

Assembly's tournament!" The cultivator said, proudly showing off.

"No! The Yan Clan's sent people to participate in the Great Immortal Ascension Assembly! Previously, they never sent anyone! If they did, then wouldn't there definitely be two less spots?"

"That's right. If one were to come across the two from the Yan Clan, it would be great misfortune!"

.....

The complexion of these cultivators were somewhat unsightly, and a few even deeply sighed.

Han Li coldly looked at the monstrous bird flying into the distance without speaking. After seeing this demonic bird, it was clear this was the monstrous eagle that Xi Tieniu had seen before and the male and female immortals were the brother and sister from the Yan Clan.

Han Li grew deep in thought and passed through the rowdy nearby cultivators, going on his way.

In the end, he faintly smiled and walked with ease.

Currently, the people in the plaza were quite numerous. Although it could not compare with yesterday night's liveliness and bustle, it could be considered completely crowded.

Han Li groped the pill medicine in his bosom and decided to see whether he could exchange this medicine for some items.

As a result, He didn't enter from the the entrance he previously used and entered the plaza from the other end. He planned to begin his stroll from the other side.

On the way, Han Li occasionally browsed left and right, looking at vendor stalls' various materials and talismans. A few odd and wonderful magic tools also gave him a feast for the eyes.

Suddenly, Han Li's footstep stopped in front of some vendor's stall. He looked at a thin book on display, somewhat lost in thought.

The tile showing the book's price noted: "Eternal Spring Arts", Wood-

element Foundation Building Cultivation Technique. Costs two low-grade spirit stones.

“I want this book!” Han Li calmly said to the vendor after he picked up this book and flipped through it.

Chapter 137: Golden Sincerity Brush

“Two spirit stones!” A clear, melodious female voice reached Han Li’s ear.

Han Li was shocked. He discovered that the vendor sitting across from him with their head buried in a book was actually a sweet and charming young lady.

“This book doesn’t have anything missing?” Han Li asked after he recovered.

“Nothing. First through thirteenth layer of the Eternal Spring Cultivation Art is completely there, with not a single missing line.” The young lady answered with an easy-going manner.

Han Li nodded his head. Then he flipped through several pages before closing the book.

“Would you exchange it for medicine pills?” Han Li asked straightforwardly.

“Medicine pills?” The young lady was somewhat stunned, widely opening her beautiful eyes.

“It depends on the medicine. If it’s for healing or illness, it will be extremely costly!” The young girl spout out as she stroked her forehead.

Hearing this young lady’s words, Han Li knew this matter was of great importance and bluntly handed over a bottle of “Yellow Dragon Pellets”.

“Consolidation medicine, it can progress once’s magic power!” Han Li said assuredly.

“Consolidation medicine?”

The young woman who was originally calm grew somewhat tense. She moved toward Han Li and lightly took the jade bottle. She tossed out a medicine pill and lowered her head to smell the medicinal quality.

Han Li stood above her and clearly saw the young lady’s exposed jade neck. In addition, because the young woman was too close to him, the

scent of a refined clan daughter assailed his nose and caused Han Li's heartbeat to involuntarily speed up. His complexion also grew slightly red.

(TL: Jade 玉 is synonymous for refined or flawless beauty)

"It truly is a medicine pill that can progress one's magic power!" A moment after the young woman smelled it, she shouted with pleasant surprise.

She raised her head and looked at Han Li with a happy expression, expectantly saying, "Do you still have more of this medicine pill? If so, I will exchange for how much you have. You can select the things in my stall as you wish. If there is nothing that will do, I can also purchase it with spirit stones!"

With this said, the young woman tightly held the medicine bottle. Her eyes were unblinkingly fixed onto Han Li, afraid that she would hear him say 'no'.

Seeing the charming and gentle young woman suddenly tense up, Han Li found it funny. However, he could not help but think to himself that he had underestimated the value of this medicine pills a bit. In the future, he should be a bit more prudent!

"Young woman, don't be anxious. First let's finish the business before us. Will it be fine to talk about it further then?" Han Li originally thought to refuse her. However, when he saw the clear expression in her eyes, he unknowingly recalled his little sister all of a sudden. His heart softened for a moment and those words slipped out.

"I am truly embarrassed! I've somewhat forgotten my manners." The young woman seemed to have become aware of her lack of manners, and her complexion turned scarlet.

"This book only requires two pills of this kind of medicine." The young lady said after she calmed down.

When Han Li heard this, he felt the her price could be regarded as fair, so he agreed. Then his gaze swept across the other goods in her stall.

“What is this?”

An unremarkable small grey bag piqued Han Li’s interest. This bag was unusual; the bag’s opening was bound tightly by a thin red rope, and its interior was bulging! Han Li reached out to grab it.

“This is a bag of Seven Star Grass seeds. Seven Star Grass of ten years or more is the best material to create paper talismans.” The young lady clearly said.

Han Li’s heart was moved. This would be quite useful. However, he put it down in front of him without the slightest hesitation.

“The other items seem to be of no use to me.” Han Li slowly said after looking through once more.

“You truly won’t select anything else? This Cold Ice Talisman is quite power. There is also this Returning Spring Talisman, it can restore a great portion of your physical strength...” The young lady was somewhat resigned and took the initiative to give Han Li recommendations.

Having seen the young woman’s “you’re young and naive so you don’t know” appearance, Han Li could not help but laugh.

“What’s so funny?” The young woman blushed once more.

“I actually only wanted to buy cinnabar powder and a brush for drawing talismans. Unfortunately, you have neither here!” Han Li spoke the rarely said truth.

“Cinnabar powder and talisman drawing brush!” The young lady wrinkled her brow and exclaimed somewhat hesitantly.

She lowered her head and muttered to herself for a moment. It greatly seemed that she had made up her mind. Suddenly, she raised her head toward Han Li and said, “I don’t have cinnabar powder, but I have a top quality talisman brush made from the neck hair of the demonic beast, Golden Eyed Ape. However, its price is quite high. I don’t know if you have enough medicine pills to exchange for it.”

When Han Li heard this, he was somewhat amazed. However, he kept

smiling and said, "So long as it is good, I will be able to satisfy young lady with regards to the medicine pills."

When the young lady heard this, she felt relieved.

She took out a spiritual talisman and used her hand to make several cutting motions over the talismans. She then threw it into the air, and it disappeared in a blaze.

"Your esteemed self, please wait a moment. My elder brother will bring it shortly!" The young woman added, somewhat embarrassed.

"No problem. So long as it is truly a good item, I don't care about waiting for a bit longer!" Han Li calmly said.

After this, Han Li and the young woman had nothing to say during this time, which caused them feel a rather ambiguous feeling.

Han Li actually somewhat indulged in this peculiar feeling and faintly smelled her delicate fragrance as he breathed. The young lady had her head lowered and was looking at the end of her feet. It was unknown what she was thinking. However, when Han Li saw her spotlessly white neck, he blushed a bit.

"Little Sister!" A large voice abruptly shattered the subtle atmosphere, causing Han Li to not help but want to ferociously glare at the voice's owner. However, when Han Li turned around, he could not help but start after he clearly saw the figure approaching.

He was a large tall and sturdy man with a stature no less than that of Crooked Soul. He was currently rushing toward them. On the way, he bumped into a few cultivators, who swaying side to side. Those cultivators were originally angry. However, after seeing the huge man's far beyond normal stature, they all exposed an expression of shock and hesitated; without a better option, they pinched their nose and let it go.

When the young woman saw the large man's actions, she had a bit of a headache. Her elder brother's behavior was far too rude and careless. Did this not give cause and reason for other cultivators to arouse dislike for him?

“This is for Little Sister! I brought the items over.” The huge man was enveloped with a squall as he charged toward Han Li’s side. He extended his hand, which was the size of a palm-leaf fan, and revealed a slender wooden box that he handed over to the young woman.

The young lady internally complained about her elder brother’s rudeness and carelessness. Then she handed over the wooden box toward Han Li, indicating that Han Li should open it and examine the contents.

Han Li took the case. After taking a glance at the young woman, he opened the case, exposing a golden brush that emitted a faint yellow light from tip to shaft.

“This brush is called Golden Sincerity. Its tip was created from the neck hair of the grade two demon beast Golden Eyed Ape, and its shaft was created from a blend of gold essence and crow iron. Then it was refined under a Foundation Establishment cultivator’s well-learned ritual fire for three days and three nights. Only then was this brush successfully completed.” The young woman softly explained. However, this woman stared at the brush with an expression that she was reluctant to part with it.

Although he didn’t completely understand what the young woman said, he knew this brush was not at all ordinary and had a great origin. He couldn’t help but feel amazed that she was willing to part with this object. Could it be for those medicine pills?

“This young woman truly wants to exchange this brush with me? This is an impressive treasure!” Han Li used his finger to lightly stroke the smooth shaft and looked at the engraving on brush’s tip. “Golden Sincerity”, he confirmed with a deep voice.

The young woman saw Han Li’s doubt. After hesitating for a moment, she decided to speak the truth and dismiss the other party’s doubts of the object’s origin, else he dare not trade.

“This brush is an item handed down by my clan. It was used by some talisman creation expert. However, it is unfortunate that us two siblings do not have the slightest talent for creating talismans and would only

squander this item in vain. In addition, my elder brother wishes to participate in this upcoming Great Immortal Ascension Assembly. His cultivation arts have already reached some sort of bottleneck and must break through with the support of medicinal power. As a result, I wish to use this object to exchange for your esteemed self's medicine pills."

"How is it that when I met you, the man's cultivation had reached a bottleneck! Isn't this too timely?" Han Li thought with doubt.

Actually, Han Li thought incorrectly!

Of those in preparations for the Immortal Ascension Assembly's competition, seven to eight out of ten were stuck at a bottleneck and were unable to break through. Because each and every person understood that they still had potential to push forward to another layer, they would not likely immediately participate in the Immortal Ascension Assembly's tournament, but rather hide away and continue painstakingly cultivating, hoping to reach a further layer. When they would participate in the next great assembly, they would break through and hold a higher position in the assembly. This caused every Immortal Ascension Assembly to have an amazing demand for medicine pills that progressed one magic power.

Chapter 138: The Skill of Creating Talismans

Han Li was on the way back to the building, exceptionally happy with the wooden box containing the “Golden Sincerity Brush” in his pocket.

He used three bottles of Golden Dragon Pellets and four bottles of Golden Essence Pills to exchange for the young woman’s treasured item and the bag of Seven Star Grass seeds. After, he casually bought some cinnabar sand from other vendor stalls and rushed back full of anticipation and joy.

After he opened the restriction barrier and entered the small building, Han Li saw the small Buddhist monk meditating and did not disturb him. Instead, he went to the second floor and returned to his room.

After Han Li arranged the cinnabar and the talisman paper on the desk, Han Li took out the Golden Sincerity Brush and became absorbed in creating Soul-Lock Talismans.

According to the Soul-Lock technique’s method to create talismans, the steps were: channel spiritual power through right hand and slowly pour it into the brush shaft being held. Then lightly dip the brush tip into the cinnabar and draw the talisman incantation onto a slip of talisman paper.

A quarter hour later, Han Li wore a happy expression on his face and stretched his somewhat stiff body. He looked at the spiritual talisman flickering a silver light on the table and could not help but feel elated.

From its appearance, this spiritual talisman was exactly the same as the one used by Doctor Mo. Although its Spiritual Qi was slightly weaker, it was of no matter as it was far better than the false goods Han Li practiced with. After all, those practice materials were only similar in appearance and didn’t have the slightest spiritual power.

Han Li took the newly created spiritual talisman and excitedly studied it. After he was done, he prepared to attempt the Soul-Lock technique. Unexpectedly though, before he executed the spell, the spiritual power on

the paper talisman sudden grew chaotic and showed signs of violence.

Han Li was shocked and reacted instantly, hastily throwing the talisman away.

Puchi. The Soul-Lock Talisman suddenly combusted into the air without reason and turned into a ball of fire, reduced to a pile of ash.

Han Li blankly looked into the air and remained silent. A while later, he sighed. It seemed that talisman was a failure.

Han Li felt somewhat dispirited, but he did not yet lose his confidence. After all, he felt that the talisman from a moment ago was quite close to being a success. He believed if he were to exert his strength and create several more, he was certain to have success.

For the next half day, Han Li manufactured Soul-Lock Talismans one after another. However, he had continuously failed.

The spiritual talismans he created did not combust by themselves but instead suddenly turned into a small explosion when injected with his magic power. Furthermore, there were also spiritual talismans that would rapidly lose their spiritual power and become useless paper.

When Han Li saw the last paper talisman he completed explode into shreds with a bang, the typically cool-minded Han Li could not help but raise his head to the roof and abruptly shout curses, "Damned Heavens, you're playing with me! A dozen paper talismans, how could I not succeed a single time! This is only an elementary low-rank Soul-Lock-Talisman! Could it be that today was not a good day?"

After these words left Han Li's mouth, he felt his depression with had greatly lightened, and his mood became a bit happier.

He tilted his head and pondered. Then he raised his eyebrow and looked at the remaining smaller half left in the small box of cinnabar and the Golden Sincerity Brush. He felt that the cause was not from either of these because his spiritual power poured into the brush shaft very smoothly and the cinnabar boldly imprinted the Spiritual Qi onto talisman paper. It didn't seem fake.

Since Han Li could not find the reason after a moment of careful consideration, he decided to ask the small Buddhist monk and see whether or not he could dispel his doubts. At this moment, Han Li felt that on the path of cultivation, there would be teachers that could give directions. This was truly important. His heart was rather moved at the thought of formally becoming an apprentice to a master.

After the small Buddhist monk heard Han Li's complaints over the failure of his talismans, he stared at Han Li with an exceptionally odd gaze as if his face had suddenly sprouted a small white flower.

When Han Li saw the Buddhist monk's reaction, his heart was somewhat startled. He didn't know if there was something amiss from the words he had just said, causing the other party to stare at him in this way.

"Almsgiver Han Li, I fear you understand too little about creating talismans!" The small Buddhist monk eventually said.

"Master Ku Sang is correct. This is the first time I've created talismans." Han Li honestly admitted.

"Among us cultivators, those of us who personally create talismans are few. If there is anything requiring the use of a talisman, they would generally purchase or exchange for it at a marketplace. Even if they are from a great clan, they must also do this."

"Why?" Han Li was amazed.

"It's quite simple. Those masters experienced and specialized in creating talismans are too few. In addition, the cost to nurture a qualified talisman expert is far too great. Only with the strength of those large cultivation clans can they be nurtured.

"Almsgiver Han felt very vexed after having failed a dozen times in succession, right?" The Buddhist monk asked.

"That's right. I've used up my materials and money. I purchase enough to make several Soul-Lock Talismans!" Han Li said, upset.

"However, does Almsgiver know? For novices beginning to learn to

create talismans, failing a hundred times in succession is a normal matter. If a person were to have slightly less talent, to persist in having several hundred failures wouldn't be strange! Only after creating over a thousand talismans would your rate of success possibly gradually increase. This is only with regards to creating a single type of spiritual talisman. If you were to change it to another kind of talisman, even if you are no longer a novice, you would generally fail at the beginning. Nevertheless, those with frightening talent are astonishing to see. As a result, qualified talisman masters cannot be nurtured without the practice of several tens of thousands attempts. However, how many people did Almsgiver Han Li think would succeed with this amount of material? Not cultivator clans but only great cultivation sects can foster a talisman master. In addition, they would only be able to contribute elementary talismans. If they were to practice creating middle grade talismans, those great sects would likely lose their fortunes. It would be an unbearable burden. After all, the higher grade the talisman, the more costly the talisman creation materials would be."

The Buddhist monk said all of this, causing Han Li to be dumbstruck.

"Then why do vendor stalls still sell cinnabar and talisman paper!" Han Li had second thoughts and felt something was wrong.

"Hehe! Cinnabar and talisman paper are sold to cultivators who use talisman techniques." The small Buddhist monk said with a smile.

"Talisman techniques?" Han Li did not understand.

"It is the same as Soul-Lock Technique your esteemed self was practicing. They are magic techniques that require the use of a talisman created in advance! The magic technique would be stored within the talisman paper, allowing the talismans to be used at convenience. A talisman technique's spiritual talismans are incapable of simply being aroused by spiritual power; they require a particular incantation to use. However they generally aren't complicated and are quite easy to obtain.

"Because talisman techniques frequently require a corresponding talisman, talisman users feel that buying talismans are too expensive. As

a result, they are like Almsgiver. They would go and practice drawing talismans. Although the cost of the materials are not small, they would be able to eventually support a single type. That is why if Almsgiver truly wishes to practice the Soul-Lock Technique, it would be best create one's own talismans in the long term. If this technique is not commonly used, then Almsgiver may as well spend some money to buy a few Soul-Lock Talismans as reserves." The small Buddhist monk softly preached, eventually giving Han Li a suggestion.

"Thank you for Master Ku Sang's pointers!" Han Li sincerely gave him a deep salute.

"Almsgiver is too polite!" Buddhist monk returned the salute.

'This small Buddhist monk actually speaks much. In the future if there is anything hard to understand, I may as well ask him for guidance.' Han Li thought to himself as he returned to the room.

'Currently, closed-door talisman creation practice is impossible! I should find some time to buy a few Soul-Lock Talismans for emergency use. My body has long achieved the peak of eighth layer of the Eternal Spring Arts. Now that I've acquired the cultivation method for the last layers, I should be able to break through the bottleneck and enter the ninth layer. In addition, I acquired several new magic techniques to practice. I should wield them a bit sooner and increase my strength.'

The moment Han Li pushed open the room door, he had already finished pondering about his future plans.

Like that, Han Li sat in room in the coming days. During the daytime, he would take a great amount of medicine and sit in meditation, refining Qi and cultivating the Eternal spring arts. At night, he would run into a desolate area in the valley and practice his newly learned magic techniques.

These were "Quicksand Technique", "Freezing Technique", "Flight Technique", "Binding Technique", "Sound Transmission Technique", "Body Concealment technique", "Fire Blossom Technique", and the most difficult to practice, "Earth Thrust Technique".

After ten days of painstaking cultivation, on the final day of the Great South Meeting, he broke through to the ninth layer of Eternal Spring Arts, causing Wu Jiuzhi and company to be dumbstruck. Daoist Priest Qing Wen even praised Han Li as a genius amongst rogue cultivators.

However, Han Li was well aware that were it not for the ten bottles of medicine pills he consumed, how else could he have easily overcome the bottleneck! However, he no longer carried many medicine pills on him. It seemed he should take the time to concoct some pills once more!

Chapter 139: Destroyed Magic Treasure

Fragment

As for the other magic techniques, the “Body Concealment Technique” and “Sound Transmission Technique” were auxiliary magic techniques similar to that of the “Heaven’s Eye Technique”. So long as one somewhat comprehended magic power, they were able to learn it. As a result, Han Li effortlessly mastered them.

Among these, the Sound Transmission Technique was a talisman technique that required a Sound Transmission Talisman, which Han Li had seen being used several times.

The “Body Concealment Technique” was an extremely common magic technique. By attaching spiritual power to one’s body, the body becomes enveloped in the environment’s colors, causing people to have difficulty perceiving the user. This magic technique, however, holds little value because the Heaven’s Eye Technique can easily break through it. It fundamentally could not be used to escape the notice of other cultivators.

The “Quicksand Technique” and “Freezing Technique” were magic techniques with areas of effect. The first used magic power to turn the earth in an area into sand. The other could freeze the water in an area into ice.

The might of these two magic techniques depended entirely on the deepness of the magic power used and intention. If a Deity were to put it to use, turning a 1000 li of fertile land into desert and the Chang Jiang River into a glacier would not be impossible.

The reason as to why they were classified as elementary low-grade magic techniques was only because these two magic techniques were quite easily learned. Even Qi Condensation cultivators with few layers were able to easily master them. However, their magic power would be limited, and their range would be pathetically small.

When Han Li originally practiced these two magic techniques, they

were quite power intensive. However, when he suddenly broke through to the ninth layer, his magic power rapidly increased, allowing him to use his magic techniques as he wished. He could already control an area the size of a tabletop and could turn it to sand or freeze it as he pleased, causing Han Li to be greatly excited.

As for the remaining magic techniques, Han Li was unable to grasp them at the moment. He could only helplessly deliberate and study them later in the future. Because the Great South Meeting was about to end, the amount of young cultivators that came to do business would reach its peak in its last two days.

At this moment, Han Li was in the large business plaza that was crowded to the brim with 2000 cultivators. The amount of vendor stalls were also several times greater than before. For the most part, they wished to grab onto this final opportunity and peddle their leftover goods. In addition, an unknown amount of higher level cultivators that emerged from long cultivation began to appear one after another, also wanting to take advantage of this opportunity to observe those who could become formidable opponents.

Han Li bitterly smiled. Although he had already entered the ninth layer, while he was walking amongst the crowd of cultivators, he discovered many people that were above the ninth layer.

Currently, Han Li no longer had any spirit stones, and his medicine pills were few in number. Since he had no intention of getting rid of his treasures, he simply followed the stream of people from vendor stall to vendor stall. He went simply to hear other cultivators' comments and views on the trades of goods to further his experience and knowledge.

Hearing others speak truly broadened Han Li's horizons, causing him to understand quite a bit about magic tools and materials. For example, magic darts that automatically pursued enemies, gourds that could shoot flames, long sabers capable of freezing people with a cut, Silver-Winged Ant eggs that could be used to create medicine, scales of a 100 year-old Iron Lined Serpents that could be used to craft tools, and so on.

The more Han Li heard, the more he felt fascinated. Han Li had arrived at the center of the plaza before he knew it.

“This won’t do. I don’t want what you’re offering, give me something else in exchange!””

“This is a destroyed magic treasure fragment! It is more than enough for your alms bowl!”

“What use would I have for this ruined fragment? Could it be that you couldn’t find a Core Formation expert to refine it? Don’t think you can exchange it with my Returning Winds Alms Bowl!

The sound of an intense quarrel arrived from the front of a vendor’s stall.

“Destroyed magic treasure fragment?” Many people let out sounds of surprise, immediately causing nearby cultivators to stir a commotion. After a moment of chaos, the vendor’s stall was surrounded by an impenetrable crowd.

It should be known that magic treasures weren’t something that low level cultivators would even dare to dream about. However, one had unexpectedly appeared in the Great South Valley. Even if it were only a ruined fragment, it was still a marvel, causing these cultivators to become like cats smelling fish. The itch in their hearts was hardly tolerable.

“Where is it?”

“Let me see!”

“Is this the magic treasure?”

“Clicks tongue, it’s truly beautiful!”

“That’s just a rag!”

.....

Because Han Li was quite close to that vendor’s stall and was already quite faster than common cultivators, he managed to rush in the crowd and obtain a good position, allowing him to clearly see everything.

Looking at the vendor stall, Han Li saw a 27 to 28 year-old man standing in front of the stall. This man had dark skin and thick limbs. At first glance, one would think a farm peasant had snuck into the Great South Valley. However, those who looked at the man's magic power with the Heaven's Eye Technique could not help but let out a breath of shock. This dark skinned man was actually a great expert of the tenth layer.

"Competing against this person, isn't that courting death?" A few cultivators inwardly weighed with surprise. They then brought their gaze toward the vendor stall's owner. The vendor seemed to be a common black-clothed man with the appearance of having magic power of only the seventh or eighth layer. However, when he confronted the man before him, his face didn't have the slightest expression of fear.

There were a few that took notice of the embroidered tree leaf design on the vendor's collar. Only then did the cultivators realize that this person was a disciple of the well known Ye Clan of the Qin Ye Mountain Range. It was no wonder he held such confidence.

Between these two people on the stall was an oddly-patterned yellow alms bowl and a small piece of translucent cloth.

This item was like a rag, wrinkled with its rim ruined unevenly as if a dog had gnawed on it. The only aspect attracting attention was the twinkling white radiance that appeared occasionally. It was somewhat peculiar.

This was the destroyed magic treasure fragment? After seeing this object, many people in the crowd were greatly disappointed. It was greatly inconsistent with what they imagined within their minds.

"This ruined magic treasure is quite wonderful! By using it to cover an item, it will immediately become invisible. Not only will its Spiritual Qi not leak out, but it also won't obstruct Spiritual Qi from entering." The dark man had a cold face.

After this was said, he immediately immediately took out small silver mouse from his sleeve.

"The grade one demon beast, Gold Eating Mouse!" The cultivators

standing in a circle yelled out the name of the rat and caused a small uproar.

“He is truly worthy of being a tenth layer expert! He actually captured a grade one demonic beast!” Many people could not help but think this.

At this moment, the dark man picked up the “cloth” and wrapped it around the mouse!

The result was miraculous! The silver mouse and the “cloth” immediately disappeared. Although many people used the Heaven’s Eye Technique, they weren’t able to see anything.

The man, having seen everyone’s shock, was somewhat satisfied. Afterwards, the hand that held the white mouse wrapped in the “cloth” suddenly showed movement.

“Not just living animal, nonliving items will also have the same effect.”

After this was said, the man took out a knife emitting a threatening Spiritual Qi and put it on the ground. Then he covered it in the “cloth”, causing it to disappear without a trace or even the slightest trace of Spiritual Qi.

“It is truly wonderful!”

“It can make things invisible!”

“Clicks tongue. Inconceivable!”

.....

Those who were watching around were discussing spiritedly.

“How about it? There is value in exchange it with your alms bowl!” The man then took off the “cloth” and put away the knife.

“I will not exchange it! If want something to be invisible, I only need to buy an elementary mid-grade vanishing talisman. For such a small thing, you would have me hide my head and legs?” The vendor shook his head and said mockingly.

“Did I not tell you? This is a destroyed magic treasure fragment. It

wasn't refined by a Core Formation expert but that of Nascent Soul. Those experts' levels are not the same. Who would be able to see through the efficacy of its concealment? How could a vanishing talisman compare to it!" The dark man angrily said.

"You spout extravagant descriptions once more! I absolutely have no use for this thing, why would I want it! You had better give me thirty spirit stones or something of equivalent value for this alms bowl!" The vendor coldly retorted.

Chapter 140: Determination to Win

“You...” The man seemed to be extremely angry. His two hands formed fists, and he advanced a step.

“What? Could it be that you’re thinking of forcing the trade? Those of our Ye Clan aren’t good targets to bully!” The vendor turned his eyes and said without a trace of politeness.

“Humph! The Ye Clan is quite impressive!” Although the dark man did not apologize, he released his fists. He was clearly afraid of retaliation from the Ye Clan.

The man was suppressed by the mere mention of the Ye Clan and was exceptionally angry. He was a tenth layer expert and was accustomed to others speaking highly of him. Currently he had accepted this embarrassment and had planned to brush his sleeve then ago. However, in his heart, he would truly hate to part with this “Returning Winds Alms Bowl” as this magic tool was well-suited with his cultivation art. If he were able to acquire it, his strength would increase greatly. However as of current, apart from the destroyed magic treasure fragment, his other possessions were quite useful, and his spirit stones had been used up over the past several days, leaving him in his current predicament.

“Brother, sell your treasure fragment to me, I will give ten spirit stones.” A grey-clothed man that was watching emerged from the crowd. He sincerely said, cupping his fist in front of the man.

“I won’t sell it! If you want to buy it, then give me thirty spirit stones.” The dark man shook his head as if he were beating a drum with it. That price was fundamentally unacceptable.

“Sigh. Your esteemed self’s destroyed magic treasure fragment, if it were only a slightly great price, then it would be worth it. Unfortunately, it is truly too small. The amount of goods it can conceal is too few!” The grey-clothed man, having been rejected by the man, exposed an expression of regret and returned into the crowd without further negotiation.

“Would you sell it for twelve spirit stones?”

“Thirteen?”

.....

Cultivators from all directions were looking at the destroyed magic treasure fragment with great interest. Even if they couldn't use this item, they could slowly study it! Who knows what they would be able to achieve enlightenment in!

Like that, the price rose to twenty after a moment, bidden by a naive-looking, round-faced youth.

In face of such a high price, others no longer spoke out. They all felt this price was quite high. If it were to grow any higher, it would be far too damaging! After all, to these low level cultivators, having ten spirit stones would be regarded as quite well-off. In addition, the man from a moment ago was most likely the disciple of a clan. Only they could possibly be that rich!

“Twenty?” The dark man's expression changed. The bid had reached his minimum! If he were to pair it with a few other objects, he would be able to exchange with the vendor for the “Returning Wind Alms Bowl.”

“You want to pay twenty spirit stones?” The man amiably said toward the round-faced youth.

Although nobody knew why, after a moment, the youth's face was red. Then after another moment, his face turned white, and he became extremely frantic.

“I... don't... have that many spirit stones!” After the round-faced youth stammered these words with frustration and unease, the surrounding spectators were shocked.

“You don't! They why did you just yell that? Could it be you said it to deliberately amuse me!” When the dark man heard this, the man's belly full of anger erupted out from his body, rigidly pressing down onto the youth with formidable grandeur.

“I simply saw everyone shouting out prices for fun! Without thinking, I also opened my mouth! Brother, please forgive me!” The round-faced

youth hastily apologized to absolve himself. His brow was beaded with sweat, and soybean-sized sweatdrops tumbled down. He was merely a fifth layer cultivator; how could he resist such spiritual pressure!

“Who just shouted nineteen? I am willing to freely give a spirit stone to allow your esteemed self to purchase this item!” The youth resourcefully yelled at once.

Unfortunately, those all around were extremely quiet. It seemed that person had already changed their mind!

“How about the brother who shouted eighteen!” When the youth saw the dark man’s increasingly scornful face, he nearly wept. He was an insignificant, young cultivator. He only had two spirit stones on him, acquired from a year of bitter labor.

Just as the people thought they were about to see quite a good show, “Wait a moment!”, a relaxed voice suddenly sounded out. A person entered the stage, calling out to the dark man.

“What do you want?” The black man looked at the person with a gloomy face. His temper had already been ground to dust. If this person wanted to have a feud, he wouldn’t mind taking them both out. Although this person was not weak, he was only of the ninth layer!

“This person has taken an interest in this item and desires it!” That individual pointed at that “cloth” and said with a smile.

The one the dark man had mistaken to be a cultivator looking for a fight was not a bystander, but Han Li.

Originally when Han Li heard this person say that this destroyed magic treasure fragment could turn things invisible and conceal Spiritual Qi, his heart was stirred, and his mind formed a vague opinion.

By the time the dark man had concealed the knife, Han Li’s opinion in his mind grew clear. He became determined to possess this destroyed treasure fragment.

“How much will you purchase for it?” The dark man was surprised, but a moment later, his expression eased as he asked this question.

“This person does not plan to purchase it, but rather use this object to exchange for it.” Han Li calmly took out a talisman from his sleeve, allowing those surrounding the stall to clearly see it.

“A flight talisman!” A few knowledgeable people cried out in alarm!

“It’s an elementary high-grade spiritual talisman!” The other cultivators were awed. After all, elementary high-grade talismans had only appeared five or six times since the beginning of this Great South Meeting. In addition, each and every one of them had been sold at astonishing prices!

Chapter 141: Writ of Immortal Ascension

With a look at this flight talisman, the dark man and the vendor stall owner were visibly moved. Their view of Han Li grew much more serious. After all, those possessing elementary high-grade talismans were unlikely to be a nobody.

“Good, I will exchange!” The dark man was very straightforward. With such an obviously advantageous trade, who wouldn’t trade?

“However, before we trade, I wish to try something you have said before, whether or not this treasure fragment will obstruct a concealed object from absorbing the Spiritual Qi from the outside world. If it is true, this person will immediately trade for it. If it is not true, this person will not take the loss and trade!”

When the dark man heard Han Li’s words, he was surprised. However, after clearly hearing the content of his words, he smiled.

“The words I have spoke regarding this object’s effects are all true. Please do not hesitate to test it!” The dark man confidently spoke.

When Han Li heard this, he was was not polite. He took out a object resembling a wine cup from his body. He then picked up the ‘cloth’ and covered it. Waiting until after the wine cup disappeared, Han Li extended his finger and condensed a white ball of Spiritual Qi the size of a bean. He lightly dropped it on the cloth, resulting in the ball of light completely disappearing, as if it were swallowed.

When Han Li saw this, his face showed a happy expression. He lightly grabbed the ‘cloth’ in his hand and removed it. The wine cup appeared, and ball of light that disappeared a moment ago was flowing inside.

“Not bad! Brother did not speak falsely. I want this destroyed magic treasure fragment. As for this flight talisman, it belongs to your esteemed self!” Han Li took the ‘cloth’ and put it in his cuff. Afterwards, he cupped his fist toward the dark man.

“Good! Your esteemed self is straightforward.” When the dark man

heard this, he was exalted and lowered his body to take the flight talisman. After he hastily looked all over it to confirm it wasn't fake, he smiled.

Han Li faintly smiled and did not say anything further. He turned around and squeezed through the crowd. However, before he even took a few steps, he heard several comments from the crowd.

"This man is foolish! To actually trade a high-grade talisman for such a weak item!"

"That's right. That fragment is so small, what use does it have? To exchange for such a thing is fundamentally not worth it!"

"Don't say it like that, maybe he has a clever use for it!"

.....

When Han Li heard this, he inwardly sneered several times. 'How could these cultivators know that this object is of immense importance to me?'

"This brother, please wait! Wait for me!" Having not walked very far, Han Li heard a voice from behind him, approaching him in a hurry.

Han Li was slightly surprised. Could they be yelling him? He could not help but turn his head.

He saw a person not too far away, running towards him with a forehead beaded with sweat while calling out to him. It was unexpectedly the round-faced youth who had nearly brought disaster upon himself.

Han Li blinked a few times and then stopped. He curiously wanted to know what business this buffoon would have with him to have pursued him at the very end.

"Brother, I've finally caught up to you!" The youth chasing him said while gasping for breath.

"Does this brother have something on his mind?" Han Li looked at him with doubt.

"This is for you! It could be considered thanks for Elder Brother's help out of the troublesome situation." Without saying anything further, the

youth handed Han Li a booklet. Then he bashfully ran back.

Han Li was slightly surprised, but he immediately smiled. There was such a simple and honest person among the cultivators. This was truly unexpected. He did not pursue him, and instead he took a look at the book in his hand.

“Record of Qing Xi” was the book’s title. It didn’t seem to be a magic item. Han Li looked through a few pages with interest.

(TL: Qing Xi 青溪 means Young Creek)

It seemed to be the journal of a senior cultivator “Daoist Master Qing Xi” of the State of Yue who did not like cultivating but instead enjoyed travelling to different places. It contained allusive legends and such with detailed notes. There were also some pages with relevant vivid and lifelike drawings. Although Han Li only looked through a few pages, he held quite an interest in this item and put the booklet into his bosom.

After that Han Li didn’t come across any particular affairs. He felt a bit bored and returned to his residence. Inside his room, Han Li lied down on his bed and looked through “The Record of Qing Xi”.

Of the contents in the book, a few were Master Qing Xi’s personal experiences and others were merely gossip. However, not one of them wasn’t bizarre. There were rarely heard unusual matters and secrets that cultivator clans would never tell others. It was unknown how Master Qing Xi had learned of them.

Han Li read with great interest. However, when he reached the final page of the booklet, there were the drawings of seven distinct command medallions. At the very bottom of the drawings were several lines of words: “Writ of Immortal Ascension”, created by the Seven Great Cultivator Sects of the State of Yue. It was the each cultivator sect’s award for accomplishing tremendous achievements within a cultivator sect. So long as one holds the cultivator’s sect command medallion, they would receive the same treatment as the final victor of the Immortal Ascension Assembly! It would bestow the qualifications to become an inner court disciple and receive Foundation Establishment Pills. However,

this object had always been handed down within the sect. Common cultivators would have no chance of seeing them. As a result, these portrayals were simply according to their appearances from rumors.

At the end, Master Qing Xi used somewhat smaller characters to write these words: this writ can be traded between cultivator clans. The age when writs were first issued was a time long ago. As a result, the cultivator clans that issued writs recognized the writs but not the people! So long as someone holds a writ, they they would take a step toward the heavens. It could be said to be a low level cultivator's defiance of the natural order!

After Han Li finished reading the explanation below, he took another look at the seven illustrations and felt his tongue dry up. His heart beat with intensity.

Originally when Han Li heard the words "Great Immortal Ascension Assembly", he faintly made an association with the dwarf's strange command medallion. One side of the command medallion had two words engraved: "Immortal Ascension". This made Han Li feel as if these two things had something in common.

After he heard the others talk about the Great Immortal Ascension Assembly in detail, there were no words relating to the Writ of Immortal Ascension. He believed this to be no more than a coincidence and left it in the back of his mind. However, he didn't expect the booklet he unexpectedly received to have the object's origin and true use. In addition, the function of this Writ of Immortal Ascension was this great!

Han Li grew more and more excited, hastily taking out the black command medallion. After briefly comparing it with the illustration, he found it to be greatly similar to its design.

"'Yellow Maple Valley', This Writ of Immortal Ascension was issued by the Yellow Maple Valley!" Han Li muttered to himself as he stroked the command medallion in his hand.

"However, how did this precious item enter the hands of a lowly cultivator like Monk Golden Light?" Han Li doubtedly thought after

calming down.

In fact, that dwarf was truly the previous owner of that command medallion!

It turned out that in the outstanding and famous Qin Ye Mountain Range, apart from the Ye Clan, there was also another equivalent Clan that resided there, the Qin Clan. Because those two clans had many intermarried relationships, they got along quite well!

This Writ of Immortal Ascension was an object passed down from the ancestors of the Qin Clan. However, they did not use it because the Qin Clan could no longer find a genius cultivator who deserved the writ! That was why they would rather continue to pass it down and were unwilling to waste this treasure for no reason.

However, after many generations, because the males of the Qin Clan grew more sparse, they gradually declined. In contrast, the Ye Clan grew even more prosperous and developed. They influenced the cultivation world so much that everyone knew that the Qin Ye Mountain housed the Ye Clan, while the Qin Clan became forgotten!

During Monk Golden Light's generation, he was actually the sole remaining male from the Qin Clan, and his aptitude was strange and lacking. He fundamentally could not possibly achieve Foundation Establishment. Because of his aptitude, the large difference in strength between the two clans, and the fact that their relationship as in-laws was a matter long expired, the Ye Clan decided to acquire the several treasures of the Qin Clan. In addition, that Writ of Immortal Ascension was the treasure they wanted to possess to most!

Although Monk Golden Light's cultivation talent was lacking, his ability to read body language was actually quite good. With the fact that he was also cowardly, just as the Ye Clan had planned to make a move, the dwarf, having caught wind of this earlier, had already fled, taking a small sword talisman and the Writ of Immortal Ascension. As for the other treasures, because they were sealed away, Monk Golden Light could not acquire them in a short amount of time and was forced to reluctantly abandon

them, setting them aside for the Ye Clan.

As a result, Monk Golden Light had been on the run for over ten years, and lived in seclusion in some Daoist temple deep within the wilderness. He relied on his shallow magic power to plunder drink and food and became free and unfettered. After a period of time, he had thought to use the Writ of Immortal Ascension, but that notion had gradually weakened. He reached the conclusion even if he were to take the Foundation Establishment Pill, he would not be able to achieve Foundation Establishment. Since that was the case, there was no need to go to a large cultivator sect as a low level disciple and suffer hardship!

Like that, after the assault of the Seven Mysteries Sect, this Writ of Immortal Ascension was conveniently acquired by Han Li.

Chapter 142: Attack to Kill

Han Li was completely ignorant of the Qin Clan's situation. However, this did not obstruct his ecstatic mood. While he excitedly walked around the room, he incessantly fiddled with Writ of Immortal Ascension in his hand. In addition, the more he looked at this command medallion, the more pleasing to the eye it became.

After the time it took to burn a stick of incense, Han Li calmed down the excitement in his heart. He began to think of his plans for the future and the feasibility of traveling to Yellow Maple Valley to formally become an apprentice to a master.

After a night of restless, difficult sleep for Han Li, the Great South Small Meeting had at last come to an end. From the beginning of the morning of the second day, many cultivators had already begun to leave the valley. The people inside the valley had already been reduced to less than half.

During the afternoon, there were several slightly older senior experts who appeared in the plaza. After they said a few encouraging words of praise, they declared the formal termination of the Great South Meeting. That Daoist Master Qingyan was also one of those experts.

Suddenly, in groups of three or four or perhaps like wild geese, the remaining cultivators flew into the sky and floated there. At this moment, Daoist Priest Qing Wen and the other went to find Han Li, inviting him to journey with them once more.

After a moment of silence, Han Li declined their invitation, greatly angering Wu Jiuzhi and the Mo Brothers. Even Daoist Priest Qing Wen's complexion was somewhat unsightly.

"Since Brother Han is unwilling to travel with us, Qing Wen will not force you. Take care of yourself on your journey, Brother!" After a sigh from Qing Wen, he said this with a regretful tone.

He then patted Han Li's shoulders and departed the valley with the others.

Han Li hadn't discovered that during the second that Daoist Priest Qing Wen patted Han Li's shoulders, a bit of colorless and formless fine powder left Qing Wen's cuff and scattered on Han Li's clothes. In addition, the area sprinkled with dust was slightly unusual but nothing could be seen.

When Wu Jiuzhi and company left the thick fog of the valley, Daoist Priest Qing Wen had fallen behind them at an unknown time and took advantage of the thoughtlessness of the several people while exposing a sinister appearance. He suddenly raised his cuff and sent a stream of flame toward the sky. It disappeared into the shrubbery at the side. His face then resumed his normal rightful and strict appearance, as if the actions from a moment ago had not occurred.

Han Li did not completely understand what Daoist Priest Qing Wen just did, but due to his continuous habit of being cautious, he didn't immediately set off from the Great South Valley but rather waited the night inside the valley. When it was early morning with the dew shining brightly, he stealthily slipped away from the valley in a manner that even gods and ghost could not see.

(TL: 神不知鬼不觉: Gods don't know and ghosts don't see)

After he left the Great South Valley, Han Li identified the direction. He used the Imperial Flight Technique and lightly tapped his foot against the ground, propelling him several zhang away. Like that, his clothes fluttered into the distance.

Not long after he departed the valley, two people hurriedly rushed over. In front of them was a green ball of light the size of a thumb guiding their way. After they turned to where Han Li was just a moment ago, they followed in the direction that Han Li flew off to. Those two people precisely followed the green light's directions.

Han Li did not yet stop on the journey, not even resting after having traveled over a hundred li . When he arrived at a small hill, he stopped to sit down and eat a few things, recovering his exhausted body and magic power as well.

Han Li did not know that his actions, having not followed common

conventions, caused the two pursuing behind him to curse endlessly.

This was not surprising. They had set out on their pursuit before the light of day. Had they not marked Han Li's body, they would have probably lost him. However, their original plan to set a trap ahead of him and ambush him had fallen through!

What made the two even more incomparably angry was that Han Li's leaps and steps and traversed more than a hundred li, causing the two to eat a bellyful of dust. They were so tired they could drop! After all, these two had been cultivators for a long time and were accustomed to living like princes. Having to bitterly rely on their legs to travel a long distance, these two had not experienced this in quite a long time.

It was not known how much time had past since Han Li had sat down cross-legged inside a depression of the hill and shut his eyes, motionless. It appeared he entered a state of selflessness. Apart from the sounds of the hill's wildlife around him, he heard no other noise

It was at this time that somewhere from the nearby earth, the ground broke and emitted several tens of streams of white light directly toward Han Li.

The originally motionless Han Li suddenly opened his eyes and saw the cold light. His body suddenly soared into the air without reason, and he lightly landed with both feet on an open space to the side.

Pupu! Those white lights naturally missed their target. The true identity of the sparkling and half transparent white lights that had attempted to strike Han Li during meditation was more than ten incomparably sharp ice awls!

When Han Li saw this, his expression became gloomy.

He stretched out his right hand and extended his five fingers, Zilala! After a burst of explosive sounds, five small fireballs appeared at his fingertips. These fireballs, compared to the fireballs of the common Fireball Technique, were smaller by more than half!

"Your esteemed self should taste this person's fireballs!" Han Li shouted

awe-inspiringly while gazing at the place where the ice awls flew from. Then he slightly bent his fingers and suddenly shot them. The five fireballs flew out in a line.

As soon as the fireballs were about to touch the floor, the image of yellow-clothed man suddenly appeared. Then the man flashed, and his image appeared elsewhere. He happened to avoid the fireball attack.

Bang! The small area where Han Li's fireballs exploded left a few large holes that released a blistering hot air. A few of the places exposed signs of melting from high temperature, causing the man who had dangerously escaped death to break out a cold sweat.

At this time, Han Li did not pay attention to the holes but rather firmly stared at the yellow-clothed man who jumped out. He was a slender, thirty year-old man with a cunning face.

"Why did you ambush me?" Han Li coldly asked.

When the yellow-clothed man heard this, he rolled his eyes. He sinisterly laughed several times and said, "You will know in your next life!"

Soon after, he suddenly yelled with a cold voice, "Go!"

Han Li was shocked. Just as he was about to move, he heard two slight sounds of ground breaking beneath him. Then, two large hands twinkling with a yellow radiance emerged from the ground like lightning and firmly grabbed Han Li's legs. It was as if he were immediately bound with steel chains, causing Han Li to be unable to move a single step.

"Brat, your death is certain. Your legs can't move. Let's see how you will dodge my icicle technique!" The yellow clothed man proudly said with an evil smile. He raised his two hands toward Han Li and began to mutter to himself.

As a result, the threatening cold air in front of his hands gradually condensed into white crystals, eventually taking the form of sharp ice awls.

Han Li's complexion greatly changed. His hand pressed against his

waist. The tinkling of small bells rang and a cold light flashed. He took out a shining long sword, and without hesitation, he chopped down.

Clang! It was as if the sword had struck rock and emitted sparks. In addition, those yellow large hands were unscathed!

Han Li was alarmed and angry. When he thought to make another attempt, the yellow-clothed man across from him wildly laughed.

“Haha! Die, brat!”

Han Li's heart sunk, and he immediately raised his head.

He saw twenty sharp ice awls fiercely shooting toward his entire body, without giving him a method to dodge.

When Han Li saw this, his expression became incomparably grave. He took a deep breath and bit down on his teeth. Without moving, his body strangely twisted left and right. Most of the ice awls were unexpectedly dodged by his movements. Only his right shoulder and left leg were incapable of evading and were pierced through with the ice awls. In an instant, blood flowed from the wounds and leaked through his clothes.

Pa! Han Li threw away the long sword in his hand. With his ten fingers, he sealed the blood vessels near his wounds at a lightning fast speed, causing the bleeding to suddenly stop. Then the originally complacent yellow-clothed man widely opened his eyes, not believing what he had just seen.

Han Li's expression grew dark. He used the strength in his two calves and unexpectedly twisted them as if they had no bone. After a burst of popping sounds from the legs, he suddenly shrank his body into a ball while he was still alive, and his whole body suddenly fled upward. His legs were like a slippery fish, slipping out from the stiff grasp of those two large hands. He then shot into the air and landed more than ten zhang away, coldly staring at the large hands.

“Impossible! How did his legs slip out from the grasp of my Tremendous Strength Technique?” From the earth below the hands spoke a muffled, angry and alarmed voice.

Then the two hands stiffly emerged out from the earth, revealing a burly silhouette covered in a bold yellow light.

Chapter 143: Beheading

The large man that had just emerged from the ground and the yellow-clothed man started to chase after Han Li.

As they chased him, they were afraid that Han Li would run far away again. After recovering a bit of magic power, they immediately grouped up and planned their next attack.

At this time, Han Li felt a scorching pain from his wounded thigh. It seemed that his movements from a moment ago had worsened his injury.

However, now was not the time to think about that problem! The large man that had concealed himself in the ground a moment ago took out a long saber covered in black Qi and fiercely charged toward Han Li.

When Han Li saw his opponents' figures, he observed that although they were quite fast, their movements were stiff. It was clear these people only relied on the support of magic techniques. His heart could not help but slightly relax. It should be known that Han Li's strange and quick movements would prevent them from catching up to him!

With that thought, Han Li no longer paid attention to the large overbearing man and placed his attention onto the yellow-clothed man instead, as the man had taken out a dark green gourd. He had pointed the mouth of the gourd toward Han Li, seemingly wanting to cast a magic technique!

"Where do you think you're looking? Die!"

The large man charged next to Han Li with a greatly flourished yellow light on his body. He lifted his demonic long saber and chopped it down toward Han Li.

Han Li snorted. His body flashed, appearing outside the reach of the saber.

"You were fooled, boy!" The large man wildly laughed.

A black light from the long saber in his hand flashed, and turned into a long black rope. Like a long snake, it closely followed and twisted toward

Han Li, neither locking him down nor letting him go!

Han Li was startled, and his body immediately grew strangely indistinct. One moment he was at the left, then right, then front, then back, as if there were several Han Li's encircling the large man.

When the large man saw this, he grew greatly intimidated. However, he immediately protected his body with the "Earth Armor Technique" and no longer paid it any attention to Han Li's afterimages. Instead, he hastily moved his flexible black rope and did his utmost to pursue Han Li's true body.

Pengpeng. Pengpeng. Han Li swept past the side of the large man. During that instant, he fiercely shot fireballs at the large man with both hands around him. As they hit his body, the yellow light shook for a moment. Unfortunately, it recovered at once.

"How could this meager Fireball Technique break through this Uncle's defensive technique!" The large man's face was savage, and the movement of his hands grew even more rapid; the movements of the black rope didn't relax even the slightest.

Han Li felt somewhat anxious! Although the large man's black rope was somewhat slower than him, he was unable to cope with it. He dared not slow down his body's movements, else he was certain to be caught. Although he didn't know what sort of magic tool the black rope was, it was quite troublesome! However, he didn't dare to negligently let it wrap around him!

He busily glanced toward the yellow-clothed man and saw that his expression was solemn. The magic tool gourd in his hand started to release a secretive azure light. It was unknown what would about to emerge from within!

"This won't do. If this continues, he will be able to keep his life! If I don't brave this danger, I will die!" Han Li thought to himself, having seen the desperate circumstances.

As a result, Han Li rushed to take out the guardian talisman he received from Monk Golden Light. This Guardian Talisman was a type of talisman

technique. Its incantation had long been acquired from Buddhist Monk Ku Sang. Now he had finally used it.

Han Li softly chanted the incantation verses. Because he was in the middle of moving, it sounded somewhat ambiguous. However, the talisman's golden characters started to brighten. When the golden characters were completely shining, Han Li suddenly slapped the talisman onto his body. A golden light suddenly appeared and covered his body with a golden barrier. However, his body suddenly became slower, and the black chain overtook him and wrapped around him.

The usage of a Guardian Talisman caused one's movements to slow. Han Li had already tested this and was well aware. Although the black rope wound around him several times, when it was obstructed by the golden light, he did not panic! He knew that his gamble was correct as the golden barrier protected him against the magic tool's assault.

When the large man saw this, he let out a low roar. He charged forward with large strides, with obnoxious, dazzling yellow light on his fists. They seemed to be supported by an unknown cultivation technique.

Having learned a lesson from last time, Han LI did not let the large man get close. He suddenly crouched and pressed both hands against the floor. Then he muttered an incantation, suddenly causing his hands be slightly enveloped in a yellow light.

When the large man saw this, he was slightly startled and hastily stopped. However, it was already too late. The floor below him completely turned into soft and weak quicksand, causing his legs to be deeply buried to his thighs and to become flustered.

"Strike!" A sharp voice entered Han Li's ear.

Han Li's heart sunk as he looked toward the yellow-clothed man.

With only a single look, Han Li saw seven to eight black spheres the size of chicken eggs emerge from the mouth of the black gourd and rush toward him.

Han Li's face grew very unsightly, and the yellow light in his hands

scattered. He then took out a wooden box from his bosom.

At this time, the several spheres were already in front of him and ruthless pounded against Han Li's barrier. The barrier was incessantly deformed, as if it could break at any moment.

Han Li didn't take notice of this crisis and sat down cross-legged, putting the wooden box on his knee. He then rushed an incantation.

Pengpeng! Pengpeng! Pengpeng! The spheres' attacks were fierce and didn't cease attacking the golden barrier for even a moment, causing the golden light to gradually dim. It seemed the barrier would break and that death would approach.

At this time, Han Li shouted with a roar, "Rise!"

With this order, a gray light perhaps a zhang long shot forth from within the wooden box. This ray of light resembled a flood dragon that had emerged from the water; it flew several circles and all directions, and hacked all of the spheres into two one after another as if they were its nemesis, turning them to dust.

"Talisman treasure!" The yellow-clothed man loudly shouted as if he had seen a ghost.

When Han Li heard this, his heart stirred. However, he did not think of it further as the large man had already escaped from the trap. However, after seeing Han Li's gray sword light, his complexion grew deathly white! Not only did he not think to rush toward Han Li, but he also turned around and wildly fled.

Thought at this time, Han Li was already resolved to kill. How could he let these people leave? He pointed to the large person, and the sword light immediately and fiercely pursued, appearing behind the large man's body.

It coiled around the large man's neck and his skull easily tumbled to the ground. It was as if the yellow light protecting his body didn't exist, not affecting it in the slightest.

When the yellow-clothed man saw this, he had actually dared to stay there for the moment. He took out a talisman and slapped it onto his

body, causing him to spout out a pair of large yellow wings. He lightly flapped them and soared off, flying to a distant place.

Han Li then commanded the sword light to pursue, closely following behind the yellow-clothed man. The yellow-clothed man flew even faster, and the grey light was unexpectedly unable to overtake him for a time.

Han Li felt slightly anxious, and his heart grew fierce. He then used all of the magic power he had without reserve. It was as if that grey streak had immediately consumed a tonic and suddenly sped up, piercing through the chest of the yellow-clothed man and thoroughly bringing peace to Han Li's heart.

The yellow-clothed man screamed and fell from the air.

Han Li grew greatly cheerful and recalled the gray light. He dashed toward the man, hoping to capture him alive and carefully interrogate him.

Unfortunately when Han Li arrived at the crash site, the yellow-clothed man couldn't possibly be any more dead. He simply fell to his death, causing Han Li to be quite depressed!

Since there were no living mouths, he could only search the two bodies and see whether he could find any useful clues.

After Han Li impolitely plundered all the items on the two men's bodies, he did not find any relevant items. Even so, he struck it rich! These two men actually had fifty low-grade spirit stones as well as a few talismans and magic tools!

Han Li could not make head or tails of their assault and was somewhat puzzled. He also did not know whether or not these two had anything to do with the missing rogue cultivators. However, he didn't dare to stay here too long. After consuming a few medicine pills, he continued on his way.

Chapter 144: Dispute over a Foundation Establishment Pill

The Jian Province located in the north of the State of Yue was ranked second amongst the thirteen provinces. Its land is comprised of many hills and its population is sparse. It also bordered the State of Yuan Wu.

The Tai Yue Mountain Range was located at the western part of the province and spanned over several thousands of li. In addition, all sorts of beasts and birds of prey existed in great numbers within the desolate mountain forest. On occasion, even woodcutters and hunters would start rumors of having seen Immortals and monsters, further shrouding the location in mystery.

Naturally, no common man would have thought that for several thousand years, the center of this mountain range had been the home of one of the seven great cultivator sects, the Yellow Maple Valley!

From the view above, it appeared no different from other mountain ranges; the ridges were steep and the forest was lush. However, it was completely an illusion as it was actually covered in a wondrously large, sect-wide formation. Underneath the formation were countless towers and grand halls that had been built long ago. There were even cultivators busily about, flying at low altitudes on top of leaf-shaped pedal magic tools.

Yellow Maple Valley's current Sect Master Zhong Lingdao was already a hundred years old. However, he still had the middle-aged appearance of having three long strands of facial hair, comprising of a mustache and beard. He was a late stage Foundation Establishment cultivator with a calm, natural disposition and was skilled at organization. Within the sect, his prestige was high. The sect elders and his fellow apprentice brothers held much confidence in him.

However, this always calm, fully confident Sect Master Zhong was currently tensing his brow as he sat in the main hall's head seat. He somewhat helplessly watched an intense dispute in front of him between

a middle-aged man and an old man. In the great hall, there were more than ten other cultivators at both sides, each with a different expression. These were the stewards of Yellow Maple Valley.

“Elder Martial Brother Murong! It is obvious that several months ago, we had already distributed all of the Foundation Establishment Pills. However, my grandnephew’s reservation was actually cancelled and given to a rogue cultivator. This is outrageous!” The old man shouted with fury toward the direction of the middle-aged scholar.

This was truly astonishing. This old man was undoubtedly much older than the middle-aged person, but he still addressed him as Elder Martial Brother!

“Junior Martial Brother Ye, this was not an accident! For the first time in several hundred years, someone had entered the sect through the use of a Writ of Immortal Ascension. How could we ignore this? We must give this person a Foundation Establishment Pill!” The middle-aged scholar calmly said with his expression unchanged.

“However, this person is simply not a person from a cultivator clan and is merely a rogue cultivator. Do we still have to give him a Foundation Establishment Pill under those circumstances? As I see it, simply letting him enter the sect is enough. With that much, he would regard that as a great fortune!” The old man disputed while flushed with anger.

“Junior Martial Brother Ye, these words should not be uttered! How do you know that his ancestors were not from a cultivator clan? Perhaps his clan simply declined and then he became a rogue cultivator! Moreover, who can guarantee their own clan will not weaken with age! Perhaps one day Junior Martial Brother Ye’s Ye Clan will also decline. When the moment comes where one of the Ye Clan’s future generation brings the Writ of Immortal Ascension, will our Yellow Maple Valley not give them a Foundation Establishment Pill and only have them enter the sect? If Junior Martial Brother dares to swear this poisonous oath in front of all is us, I, Mu Rongshan, will turn around and leave alone the matter of the Foundation Establishment Pill.”

The middle-aged man's composed and confident words turned the old man's face white then green, leaving him speechless.

How could the old man possibly dare to swear such a troublesome oath! Even if he were to swear it, only he would stand aside and leave the matter. Who knew whether others would step in?

"However, why must my grandnephew's pill be given away? Are the others' out of the question?" The old man asked, unreconciled.

"You must ask why this Junior Martial Brother's grandnephew is far too lacking! When tested, his rank was actually near last." The middle-aged man shook his head with the appearance of regret.

Seeing the person across from him act in this manner, the roots of the old man's teeth ached with hatred! However, for the benefit of his grandnephew, he couldn't do anything to him. With great resolve, he continued, "My grandnephew's ranking is truly a bit poor, but he is not last in the ranking of those that have not yet taken the Foundation Establishment Pill! Are there not still two others?"

"Junior Martial Brother is correct, There are two others that were tested and ranked lower than your grandnephew. However those two's circumstances are truly unusual! They simply have grievances toward Junior Martial Brother's grandnephew!" The middle-aged man said with a voice of great pity.

"What is unusual? If you don't give me a convincing reason, I will not swallow the tone of your voice!" The old man was nervous and let out fierce words.

"Such a willful display! What is there not to swallow? Those two people are truly unusual. Skipping over these two, Junior Martial Brother's apprentice was chosen. I had also agreed to this. As for the grounds, Junior Martial Brother need not ask; I can give you an explanation."

Zhong Lingdao, having seen the old man unexpectedly say such words, lowered his face and berated him.

Seeing Zhong Lingdao speak in such a way, the old man's heart

trembled with fear! He only knew that during the test, that there should have been two behind his grandnephew. As for who, he truly did not know. This left him truly indignant and dissatisfied! Could it be there was truly some sort of exception that caused even the strict and impartial Sect Master to side with them?

Zhong Lingdao waved his hand, gesturing the middle-aged scholar to return to his original seat. He then sighed and said, “Junior Martial Brother Ye, I fear that this time I truly must wrong your grandnephew! Of those two people, one is Martial Uncle Hong Fu’s sole descendant from the secular world. That is why although the young girl originally did not meet the test standards, I had chosen her to enter the list of those who will receive the Foundation Establishment Pill. Surely Junior Martial Disciple doesn’t want to take away this person’s Foundation Establishment Pill?”

When the old man heard the name Hong Fu, he was startled. His complexion immediately undergone a great change and was filled with fear and trepidation.

“Since it is Martial Uncle Hong Fu’s descendant, it is only natural to take care of her. How could this Little Brother disrespect his elders in this way! This Little Brother is convinced of this person’s arrangement and concedes.” The old man spoke with his face somewhat pale.

Having seen the old man’s expression as such, Great Sect Master Zhong was not at all surprised. After all, she was the sole female descendant of the Yellow Maple Valley’s Core Formation expert, Martial Uncle Hong Fu, whose temper was known to all. If he truly deprived the young girl’s qualifications to Foundation Establishment, the old man wouldn’t just be out of luck, perhaps even this Sect Master would have no good days ahead of him!

“And the other one?” The old man was still unresigned. Although he knew this remaining person was certain to have sufficient justification, he was still asked with a mind grasping for a fluke.

“As for the remaining one, his body has a strange wind attribute

spiritual root. Is this enough justification?" Zhong Lingdao unhurriedly answered as he twirled his long beard with his fingers.

When the old man heard this, he remained silent. Yellow Maple Valley's sect rules had an article that stated: Heavenly roots and unusual spiritual roots took precedence in Foundation Establishment. There was nothing he could complain about.

However, although his grandnephew was not his grandson by blood, ever since he entered the sect, he dearly looked at his growth since the very first days. He was even more intimate toward him than his very own grandsons. How could he have the heart to tell him that his qualifications for Foundation Establishment had been revoked!

"Then my grandnephew is truly without hope? It should be known that if he were to wait another ten years, he would miss the optimal period to reach Foundation Establishment and would lose his chance to enter Foundation Establishment in this lifetime!" The old man's words were somewhat bleak, stirring up a burst of whispers among those seated.

"Junior Martial Brother Ye, there is actually a way!" A somewhat gloomy, long-faced old man with a hawk nose stood and consoled the old man surnamed Ye.

"What? Senior Martial Brother Wu has a method?" When old man Ye heard this, his spirit shook. Within the sect, this Senior Brother Wu was well known for being resourceful. Perhaps he truly had a method!

The old man surnamed Wu slightly smiled and didn't immediately respond. Instead he turned to Zhong Lingdao and saluted to him, asking him with a clear voice, "May I ask Sect Master, what were the properties of the spiritual roots of the person who brought the Writ of Immortal Ascension? Have you tested him yet? What was his aptitude?"

"It seemed to be not particularly good! Junior Martial Brother Wang, you personally tested him. Why don't you tell us!" Zhong Lingdao asked someone from the left side of the row.

"Yes, Elder Martial Brother, Sect Master!" A middle-aged wearing light green clothes stood and indifferently said, "This person's age is not old.

He is eighteen or nineteen years of age. He has reached early ninth layer in a wood attribute foundation building technique. His spiritual roots are the four attributes except for metal. They could be classified as false spiritual roots. From judging as a whole, this person's aptitudes are at the bottom. However, he has come across fortuitous encounters and diligently trained, otherwise how else could he reach his current state? If he were to have no other strokes of luck, in this lifetime, he would at most train to his foundation building technique until the eleventh or twelfth layer, unable to enter Foundation Establishment. Even if he were to take a Foundation Establishment Pill, his odds of entering Foundation Establishment are only one percent..."

"Good!" The old man surnamed Wu waited until Junior Brother Wang said this before loudly interrupting.

"What is good?" The old man surnamed Ye could not help but ask.

The others looked at the old man surnamed Wu with doubtful gazes. Only Zhong Lingdao wrinkled his brow, he already had a bit of a guess in his mind.

"May I ask Sect Master, if the person that came took the initiative to renounce the Foundation Establishment Pill, would it be regarded as going against our promise!?" The old man surnamed Wu asked.

"Of course. However, no one is allowed to use threats or force to accomplish this matter. Otherwise, our Yellow Maple Valley's reputation will be ruined!" Sect Master Zhong softly and solemnly said.

"Hehe! Sect Master, please feel at ease! This is only natural!" The old man surnamed Wu faintly smiled and then turned his head toward the old man surnamed Ye, saying, "Junior Martial Brother Ye, you don't mind spending a few items to purchase his Foundation Establishment Pill, right? It should be known with such lowly aptitude, the rate of success to enter Foundation Establishment is pitifully small. This should be a great opportunity. He can to renounce the Establishment Foundation Pill to obtain something far more practical!" The old man named Wu said with a fully confident appearance.

Chapter 145: The Unexpected Guest

“That’s right! Senior Martial Brother Wu truly has a good idea!” The old man surnamed Ye’s two eyes shined with excitement.

Then he turned his head to Zhong Lindao and expectantly requested, “Sect Master, could I see the owner of the Writ of Immortal Ascension? I wish to do business with him and exchange something for his voluntary renouncement of the Foundation Establishment Pill!”

When Zhong Lingdao heard this, he muttered to himself hesitantly before nodding. However, he reminded the old man that he mustn’t overstep his boundaries and force the transaction before letting Junior Martial Brother Wang see the uninvited guest.

The old man and Junior Martial Brother Wang exited the main hall. After stepping on a leaf-shaped magic tool, they immediately soared into the sky toward Yellow Maple Valley’s guest-welcoming building.

In a room of the Yellow Maple Valley’s guest-welcoming building, a youth was lying on a bed, looking at the roof while lost in thought. He was precisely Han Li who followed them to Yellow Maple Valley after the Great Immortal Ascension Assembly’s conclusion.

After Han Li had killed the two cultivators who ambushed him, with no further external encounters, he hurried to some hidden mountain peak in the Lan Province to participate in the Great Immortal Ascension Assembly that was soon to convene and compare what he saw with the desperately fought tournaments described by Hu Pinggu.

After the life-and-death contests, with each stage having a final victor, the seven great sects’ representatives finally emerged. Yellow Maple Valley’s representative was that Junior Martial Brother Wang.

After having seen Yellow Maple Valley’s representative and taking a moment of careful deliberation, he still resolved himself to take the risk and hand over the Writ of Immortal Ascension for this man to see, causing the representative to be startled.

The representative immediately stated that he could bring Han Li back to the sect. As for the specifics towards him and the Writ of Immortal Ascension, it would be the decision of their Sect Master. After all, regaining the Writ of Immortal Ascension was a matter four to five hundred years overdue!

Han Li was naturally unopposed, otherwise he would have to find Yellow Maple Valley's mountain entrance by himself. It would be far too exhausting for him.

Like that, the other cultivators looked at Han Li with gazes of amazement. He sat on an immense boat-shaped magic tool with ten victors from the tournament and the representative Junior Martial Brother Wang. When he returned to Yellow Maple Valley, he was brought here to wait for a reply. As for the other ten, they had parted. It was unknown where they had gone.

Han Li waited here for three to four days and did not leave his room. Aside from an eleven to twelve year-old male servant delivering him food every day on schedule, he did not see anyone else.

It wasn't that Han Li was actually obedient and sincere, but after that representative surnamed Wang arranged his living conditions and tested his spiritual root attributes, he immediately told him that because he still wasn't a disciple of Yellow Maple Valley, the room would have a few restrictive techniques. For the time being, he would be unable to leave the room, otherwise he would trigger the restrictive techniques, causing him to be restrained.

Having heard the representative surnamed Wang, Han Li naturally did not bring embarrassment upon himself. In addition, after having become aware that he possessed four attribute false spiritual roots, Han Li mood took a turn for the worse.

Although Han Li already knew that his own cultivation aptitude was rather poor, after hearing it with his own ears, he became sad and dispirited for an entire day. It seemed that if he wished to remain on his path of cultivation, he would have to rely on the external power of

medicine pills and such.

However, after he ascended to the ninth layer of the Eternal Spring Arts, he felt the effectiveness of “Yellow Dragon Pellet” and “Golden Essence Pill” greatly lessening. They did not aid him as greatly as before. It seemed he must find several other spiritual medicine recipes and concoct some medicine pills truly fit for a cultivator, else the pace of his cultivation would be delayed.

Just as Han Li was immersed in thought, the sound of footsteps came from outside the door. In addition, it was the sound of not just one person. Han Li roused his spirit. It seemed that after suffering through several days, the information he was waiting for had come.

“Young Friend, have you become accustomed to living here?”

The room’s door softly opened, and the voice of the representative named Wang spoke. This man soon entered the room, followed by a blushing old man.

“Greetings, Immortal Wang!” Han Li immediately jumped from the bed and respectfully greeted him. He was fully aware that nobody would find fault with extra courtesy. Were he to humble his attitude a bit, he would only receive benefit and no detriments.

“This is...?” Han Li glanced at the old man and asked, puzzled.

“This is my Senior Martial Brother, surnamed Ye.” Junior Martial Brother Wang smiled and then explained.

Surnamed Ye? Han Li was startled. Could it be that the matter of having taken the writ after killing Monk Golden Light was revealed? Was it the Ye Clan member who sought him? However, although this old man’s complexion wasn’t too good, he did not have the appearance of great anger. It seemed he had some other mysterious reason. Han Li felt apprehensive, though this was not expressed in the slightest on his face. With the same respectful tone, he said, “So it was Immortal Ye!”

The old man sized up Han Li once through. How could Han Li look and feel so terribly ordinary? There wasn’t anything the slightest bit out of

the ordinary. He couldn't help but feel uncertain toward his purpose coming here.

As a result, after he heard Han Li's greeting, he put on a gracious face and smiled, saying, "Hehe! Young Friend Han need not be overly courteous. Since Young Friend Han arrived to our Yellow Maple Valley holding the Writ of Immortal Ascension, Young Friend is already a sect disciple. Calling me Martial Uncle Ye will suffice; you need not regard yourself as an outsider!"

After Han Li heard the old man's words, his heart greatly lightened. However, his mind was still somewhat unconvinced.

Since the other party had spoken so politely, it seems he did not have a vendetta against him. Though, wasn't this level of politely a bit too excessive? How could he be said to not be an outsider! Han Li was at a loss.

"Young Friend Han, Senior Martial Brother Ye did not speak wrongly! The current Sect Master had already agreed to allow Young Friend to become a sect disciple. In addition, a Foundation Establishment Pill has been prepared for Young Friend!" Junior Martial Brother Wang said with a light smile.

"Truly?" When the always steady and calm Han Li heard those words, he could not help but grow excited. He wished he could dance for joy and vent his feelings.

Seeing Han Li act in such a manner, Junior Martial Brother Wang smiled. He did not feel very surprised; it seemed he had already predicted Han Li's reaction!

"Junior Martial Brother Wang, I wish to speak with Martial Nephew Han alone. Could you withdraw for a moment?" The old man had grown somewhat impatient and finally spoke what he wanted to ever since he entered the room.

"Of course, this Junior Martial Brother will return to sect master first. After Senior Martial Brother and Martial Nephew Han finish speaking, come back together!" Junior Martial Brother Wang inwardly sighed. After

giving Han Li a faint glance, he left the room.

At this moment, the only two remaining in the room were old man Ye and Han Li.

Han Li was stunned at what had happened before him. How could this one surnamed Wang just walk away after being told? The one left along with him, the fellow calling himself Martial Uncle, what matter does he have to speak with him! Although he didn't know what this Senior Martial Brother Ye was up to, Han Li had a faintly bad premonition.

The old man saw that Han Li was uneasy, but he didn't care in the slightest. He was convinced the things he could put forward were certain to cause this youth inexperienced with the world to widely open his eyes and smoothly complete the transaction.

“Martial Nephew Han, Martial Uncle is a straightforward person, therefore I will not beat around the bush and openly say it! My business is related to your given Foundation Establishment Pill. I wish to purchase it from Martial Nephew. What does Martial Nephew think about it?” The old man got right to the point.

‘He actually wants to purchase my Foundation Establishment Pill! Did he not mishear? How could he sell it to someone else!’ When Han Li heard this, he was shocked. However soon after, his complexion greatly changed and became unsightly.

“Martial Nephew Han, do not hesitate to be at ease. I will not offer nothing in exchange for Martial Nephew's Foundation Establishment Pill. Seven or Eight mid-grade spirit stones, a few elementary mid to high grade spiritual talismans, and several kinds of first-rate magic tools. Martial Uncle still can bring out more things. If these truly won't do, Martial Uncle still has a few magic power progressing medicine pills. Although they are incapable of being compared to a Foundation Establishment Pill, they are spiritual medicines hard to come by even in the sect.” The old man hastily explained after clearly seeing Han Li's complexion change.

After Han Li heard these words, his complexion was much better. He

heard the sincerity in the other party's words. It seemed this Martial Uncle had no intention of harshly and unreasonably scramble to rob him. Indeed, he truly wished to buy his Foundation Establishment Pill.

Chapter 146: Closing a Deal

‘Although I have never seen the Foundation Establishment Pill with my own eyes, I, Han Li, know its value and its importance very clearly! Think about it, at the Tian Wutai Great Immortal Ascension Assembly, nearly thousands of cultivators fought a battle of life and death, and for what? Wasn’t it because of the temptation of this Foundation Establishment Pill! And this Martial Uncle Ye thinks he could just trade it away with some spirit stones and magic tools, does he really think that I am some youngster who just came from the mountains?’ Han Li thought to himself while laughing coldly on the inside, but on the outside he appeared respectful, as if he was truly listening carefully to what the Martial Uncle Ye had to say.

The old man surnamed Ye was satisfied with Han Li’s response. After all, this future disciple didn’t reject him as soon as he brought up the trade for the Foundation Establishment Pill. It seemed like this could go somewhere.

He never thought that he could easily trade the Foundation Establishment Pill with the items that were mentioned earlier from the very beginning. Anyone who was not an idiot would know to not trade this precious item for something so cheap. What he said earlier was merely a test!

But now, looking at Han Li’s attitude, there seemed to be the possibility of negotiation. He was overjoyed!

If Han Li was willing to trade, the old man was very confident that he could satisfy Han Li’s demands and trade it for the Foundation Establishment Pill. Just thinking about it made the old man surnamed Ye’s smile grow even wider. It even felt like Han Li was less of an eyesore than before!

“Martial Nephew Han, I’m sure you know about the attribute of your spiritual roots! To be honest, with Martial Nephew’s aptitude, even by taking the Foundation Establishment Pill, the rate of successfully entering

Foundation Establishment is very low! At most, the Foundation Establishment Pill would boost your magic power, and maybe level up your basic powers two or three layers! If so, taking the Foundation Establishment Pill would be too wasteful! To Martial Nephew, it would be best to trade it for something more practical and worthy, if..." the old man started talking endlessly to tempt Han Li.

Even though Han Li looked like he was paying close attention to Martial Uncle Ye, he was already analyzing, calculating the pros and cons in his head.

Honestly, he knew very well that what the old man said was true. The chance of attaining Foundation Establishment after taking merely one Foundation Establishment Pill was almost too low! But if Han Li gave up the Foundation Establishment Pill that easily, he wouldn't forgive himself. Because even if the chances were low, wasn't there still a slight possibility of success?

But if he doesn't give up the Foundation Establishment Pill to this Martial Uncle Ye in front of him, then his life in Yellow Maple Valley would definitely be unenjoyable. It was likely he would cause this person to hold a grudge for no reason. He also seemed to have some power in the Yellow Maple Valley. If that was the case, then it would be troublesome.

"Martial Uncle Ye, may I please ask who you are requesting the Foundation Establishment Pill for? I am sure that Martial Uncle Ye doesn't need this item anymore!" Han Li thought for a while and decided to probe the old man's intentions.

Even though the old man was interrupted by Han Li, he did not seem unhappy at all. Hearing Han Li's question, he hesitated a little, but still told Han Li,

"Since you asked, I, Martial Uncle, have nothing to hide. I am requesting this Foundation Establishment Pill for someone surnamed Ye's grandnephew. Will Martial Nephew please fulfill our wish?"

Han Li laughed bitterly in his heart after hearing this, and thought:

'Grandnephew, I guess that's a tight enough family relationship! If he

can make the Martial Uncle Ye try so hard, and to even ask to trade the Foundation Establishment Pill from a junior, he must be extremely lovable! Looks like if I really don't trade with him, there is a hundred percent chance that I will provoke this old man. After that, I would never be able to settle in the Yellow Maple Valley. I can only swallow my pain and agree to trade! As for how I'm going to achieve Foundation Establishment, I will have to think of some other ways in the future. I still have that mysterious little bottle, and if I have the recipe and time, what medicine can't I make?'

After Han Li finished considering the pros and cons, he had made his choice. However, he wanted to get the most out of the trade, so he acted as if he was struggling and having trouble deciding.

"Martial Uncle, it's not that Junior is disrespecting Senior, but the Foundation Establishment Pill is also incredibly important to Martial Nephew! Even if Junior has low potential, isn't there still a sliver of hope? If I just give up this opportunity to become Foundation Establishment now, then Junior would really have no chance with the great path!"

After the old man heard Han Li out, he couldn't help but to scoff in silence! He thought to himself: "You can't possibly be considering the higher path with your low qualification. You are completely overestimating your own abilities."

But on the surface, the old man was still persuading him patiently from different angles while making a lot of empty promises. He continued to pressure and change Han Li's decision into agreeing to trade the Foundation Establishment Pill.

Hearing these empty promises, Han Li laughed coldly in his heart, but he kept on saying words with uncertainty and making himself sound even weaker. This thrilled the old man even more, as he continued to bargain with an even higher price.

"Martial Nephew! If you are willing to give up the Foundation Establishment Pill, I can let you choose any chore you want from the chores that the disciples at the Valley are required to do!" Seeing Han Li

was on the edge of agreeing to the deal, he finally played his trump card.

“Chores?” Han Li was really stunned this time.

“Yes, you should know that the low level disciples at Yellow Maple Valley must complete an assignment every month. For example: going to a few mines and supervise the miners, be an administrative disciple at a city market owned by our sect, take care of the Valley’s rare creatures, or growing some wonderful, spiritual medicines. Based on how the job was completed, the sect will hand out some low-grade spiritual stones to these disciples as a reward. And I, Martial Uncle, am responsible for distributing these types of jobs in the Valley. So if there are any jobs that Martial Nephew would like, it would be all up to me,” the old man surnamed Ye said proudly, seeming like he truly did have the power and confidence.

But having listened to this, Han Li was speechless! It seemed like no matter where he was, there were always people who used their powers for their self interest, including major cultivation sects like the Yellow Maple Valley.

But when he mentioned the job about planting incredible medicinal plants, it interested Han Li. He felt like this job was made for him. Additionally, Martial Uncle Ye already promised a lot of good deals. If he kept dragging it out, it might start to seem like he was being too greedy, so he should close the deal when he could!

Right about now, Han Li finally acted like he was moved, and said to the old man in a bitter tone:

“Since Martial Uncle Ye has gone out of his way like this, if I still don’t agree to trade with you, it would seem like I’m not giving you face. If you can really give me what you promised, then your grandnephew can have Martial Nephew’s Foundation Establishment Pill. I hope your grandnephew can successfully reach Foundation Establishment!”

Once the old man heard this, he was delighted, and sincerely promised, “Martial Nephew doesn’t have to worry about a thing, Martial Uncle always delivers on his promises. But when we meet the Sect Leader later,

you are free to tell him about the trade that was on the table, but don't bring up the deal that we had privately!"

Han Li took the hint, smiled and humored him, "I can assure Martial Uncle, Junior knows what to do, I would not do something that stupid."

Hearing this, the old man broke into a smile. He was very satisfied with Han Li's cooperative behavior.

Chapter 147: The Particulars Within The Valley

After Han Li and Old Man Ye finished their business, Han Li was brought to the main hall on a flying magic tool toward the main hall to reply to Yellow Maple Valley's Sect Master Zhong Lingdao.

Not long after, Han Li stood in front of the immense stone palace hall that was several tens of meters tall and was curiously sizing up several Yellow Maple Valley disciples who were standing guard at the gate. These people's magic power was far more profound than Han Li's. At the very least they had reached the tenth layer or higher of their foundation cultivation technique. Han Li could not help but be inwardly surprised toward this sect's cultivators' strength and impressive appearance.

Just a moment ago, when he and Old Man Ye arrived at this place, Old Man Ye had him first stay outside the hall. He was to wait for Sect Master Zhong's summons before going in by himself. This caused Han Li to awkwardly wait outside the palace hall, making him break into a string of silent curses.

After a long while, a white-clothed middle-aged man came outside and directly arrived in front of Han Li. He coldly said, "Follow me in. Sect Master summons you."

Then, without waiting for a response from Han Li, he returned, paying heed only to himself. Han Li inwardly smiled bitterly. It seemed a ninth layer Qi Condensation cultivator such as himself, simply could not be put into the person's eyes. He didn't want to say more than a single phrase to him!

Although he was discontent toward this person's arrogance, Han Li clearly understood his own importance here and obediently followed after him, entering the main hall.

After passing through three large gates guarded by disciples, Han Li then saw Yellow Maple Valley's Sect Master Zhong Lingdao, a middle-

aged man with a long three-strand beard.

On the two sides of the large hall sat more than ten people, each differently clothed. When Han Li entered, after he sized up Han Li a moment and saw that his appearance was common and uninteresting, he shifted his vision away, uninterested. In addition, that Old Man Ye and that Junior Martial Brother Wang were also sitting within.

“This young fellow is called Han Li?” Sect Leader Zhong serenely asked.

“That is right. Disciple Han Li meets Sect Master!” Han Li appeared to very sincerely step forward and formally salute him.

“There is no need to be overly polite! Since Young Friend carries the Writ of Immortal Ascension, this Sect Master will certainly respect the rules established by our exalted predecessors and have young friend enter the sect.” Zhong Lingdao amiably smiled like a blowing spring wind and lightly brushed his sleeve.

Just as Han Li was about to lower his body, he felt a soft incorporeal power around his thigh softly supporting him and rendering incapable of continuing to formally pay his respects. This had startled him, and he felt some reverence toward the Sect Master.

“Not only will Young Friend enter the sect, but he will also obtain the qualifications to take the Foundation Establishment Pill. I heard Junior Martial Brother Ye said that Young Friend renounced his Foundation Establishment Pill and gave it to someone else. Is this true?” Sect Master Zhong did not speak much rubbish and directly spoke of the purpose of his summon to the palace hall.

“That is right, Sect Master! Disciple feels his aptitude is lacking, and taking the Foundation Establishment Pill is truly too extravagant. Instead, I gave this precious item to a Senior Martial Brother who needed it more!”

After Han Li uttered these words, he felt his heart faintly ache. This was because of the Foundation Establishment Pill! This wasn't some kind of ordinary medicine pill that he could eat between meals!

If one were to release a Foundation Establishment Pill into the world of

cultivation, it would be a wonder if it hadn't stirred up the winds of a bloody rain! Although he could rely on his mysterious small bottle, he had no confidence that he could perfectly refine a spiritual pill like the Foundation Establishment Pill! These particular words he had just said were not from the heart.

Han Li was very reluctant to part with it. However, his appearance was completely obedient and deferential, greatly satisfying the majority of those in the palace hall.

"Good! Young Friend Han, this Sect Master is greatly gratified by your decision. However, Young Friend should not hesitate to be at ease. This Sect Master will not let Young Friend perform this sacrifice in vain!" After this was said, Zhong Lingdao turned his head and looked toward Old Man Ye.

"Junior Martial Brother Ye! Young Friend Han releases his Foundation Establishment Pill for the use of your grandnephew. However, Junior Martial Brother must compensate Young Friend for his loss. You must satisfy him!" Zhong Lingdao solemnly said.

"Hehe! Sect Master, please feel at ease. I will definitely satisfy Martial Nephew Han!" The old man saw matters unfold as he imagined, smoothly reaching an agreement. He couldn't help but burst with joy, repeatedly agreeing in response.

Having seen the old man appear this way, Zhong Lingdao fiddled with his long beard and faintly smiled. This difficult problem had unexpectedly been effortlessly resolved and satisfied both sides. This made the Great Sect Master let out a sigh of relief.

"The matter of the Foundation Establishment Pill has been resolved, and from this day onward, Young Friend Han will be a disciple of this sect. Junior Martial Brother Wang, arrange Martial Nephew Han's residence and briefly explain the valley's sect rules. First, have him see a Cultivation Guidance Disciple. If there is remarkable progress, then there may be another promotion!" Zhong Lingdao commanded Junior Martial Brother Wang with words in a way dripping water would not reveal.

“I will follow your orders, Sect Master!” Junior Martial Brother Wang stood and accepted his commands.

Thus, this Martial Uncle Wang immediately brought Han Li out of the palace hall and started to explain a few of Yellow Maple Valley’s various rules and tell him a few bits of general knowledge. Han Li attentively listened and more or less understood formed an initial understanding of Yellow Maple Valley.

Yellow Maple Valley had about ten thousand disciples in total. Of these disciples, at ninety percent were at the Qi Condensation stage. There were only a few hundred Foundation Establishment stage disciples. Those people were the central power of Yellow Maple Valley.

Above them were great Core Formation stage experts. There were only a few several. They were fundamentally in seclusion year-round and were no longer interested with the affairs of the valley. Unless it was a major event involving the life or death of Yellow Maple Valley, Sect Master Zhong would ordinarily not see these people’s faces.

As for the sole Nascent Soul expert in the valley, he was the Martial Uncle Ancestor of Sect Master Zhong and his subordinates. It was said that he was already over nine hundred years old. Not only was his magic power unfathomably deep and his Daoist techniques thoroughly profound, his Nascent Soul could exit his body and mentally journey thousands of li away. He was a true Immortal on this earth. However, this elder had long left the valley and was no longer within the State of Yue. He had already left to travel to other various countries. Who knows when he would return to the valley?

As the Qi Condensation disciples were quite numerous in the valley, it was impossible for all of them to consume the Foundation Establishment Pill! Only the most outstanding disciples with the best aptitudes would be able to have this privilege.

Therefore, every ten years, the valley’s disciples who were younger than thirty would engage in a series of selections . The competition’s fierceness was not at all inferior to the external Great Immortal Ascension

Assembly. On the whole, only true cultivation geniuses who practiced their foundation cultivation technique to the eleventh or even twelfth layer could distinguish themselves and obtain the qualifications for a Foundation Establishment Pill.

Of the several hundred best disciples who passed the strict selection, only twenty to thirty would enter Foundation Establishment after taking the Foundation Establishment Pill. The rest would at best advance their magic power a step and reach the peak of their foundation cultivation technique but never pass it.

Naturally, the disciples in the valley were divided into three levels of hierarchy.

The lowest were the disciples who had not yet taken a Foundation Establishment Pill. These people were the most numerous within the valley, and their magic power were the most shallow. These people ordinarily undertook lowly tasks and cultivated for the least amount of time. However, although they may be the lowest ranked in the valley, they had quite a grand name, “Honored Disciples”.

(TL: the 执事 “Honored” in honored disciples also means attendant.)

With slightly higher positions were those who had taken the Foundation Establishment Pill, but were unable to enter the Foundation Establishment stage. These disciple’s foundation cultivation technique had basically reached their peak. Their magic power was far greater than those Honored Disciples. They were even able to use a few simple mid-grade cultivation techniques. As a result, they assumed the duty of leading and administering these numerous Honored Disciples. They were commonly called “Consul Disciples”.

Those with the highest positions were the disciples who had entered Foundation Establishment. They were the favorites of the Heavens and were regarded as true Immortal cultivators; true experts who had stepped foot on the path of Immortal cultivation.

After these people succeeded in entering Foundation Establishment, they were permitted to find a region with abundant Spiritual Qi and

create an Immortal's cave to cultivate alone. They need not undertake any lowly tasks and only concentrate on cultivating. In addition, every year they would be granted all sorts of uncommon materials and a large amount of spirit stones to support and expedite their cultivation. Their sole duty was to aid the sect when it encountered great enemies. To disobey this order was unacceptable.

Apart from the disciples of Yellow Maple Valley, there were the true powers that controlled the sect from within, the many stewards.

These stewards were those disciples who, after entering Foundation Establishment, cultivated for an amount of time and were aware that they were unable to enter Core Formation. They voluntarily renounced their continued cultivation and were willing to enter the inner valley's specialized administration, performing various duties. Old Man Ye and those tens of people within the main hall were all these kinds of stewards.

Actually, Sect Master Zhong Lingdao was a high level steward. However, he took charge of the entire sect's overall planning and was the steward of all the stewards.

True decisions regarding the life or death of the sect were decided by those reclusive Core Formation experts. Their mere existence allowed Yellow Maple Valley to be viewed upon as one of the towering seven great Immortal sects, and made it so that evil spirits dared not to cause harm to the sect. Otherwise, Yellow Maple Valley of the seven great Immortal sects would have already been long exterminated countless times from those demons with profound magic power.

Naturally, the information mentioned above did not come from this Martial Uncle Wang but was secretly inferred by Han Li from inquiries and Martial Uncle Wang's words.

This allowed Han Li to have a clear understanding of his status and environment. This would later be of no small assistance to him when interacting with fellow sect disciples.

Chapter 148: Old Man in Gray

Martial Uncle Wang took Han Li with him on a leaf-shaped magic tool and flew for a couple of hours. They landed on a lush verdant mountain range, within an area crowded with flat houses. These shabby houses were built using rocks from the mountain, and there wasn't a single person inside these houses. They seemed like they were all empty, and this puzzled Han Li!

"Don't be surprised. These houses are truly empty. This place is meant for the new disciples to live in until they improved their magic power, then they will move out and look for somewhere else to live. It happens it is currently the beginning of the ten-year rotational cycle. The new disciples haven't joined the sect yet, so the houses are temporarily empty," Martial Uncle Wang spotted Han Li's confusion and explained softly. This cleared Han Li's bewilderment.

Martial Uncle Wang led Han Li the way as they walked among houses, making so many turns that Han Li felt dizzy. Then they finally stopped at a house that was larger than the other normal stone houses. He didn't explained much to Han Li and started yelling loudly, "Junior Martial Brother Lin, open the door. I brought a new disciple to pick up the items!"

As soon as Martial Uncle Wang finished yelling, the door opened outwards automatically in a whoosh. Seeing this, Martial Uncle Wang walked in without any hesitation. Han Li paused a little, and followed him into the house.

Inside the house, it was more spacious than it looked outside. This amazed Han Li, wondering what the house was tempered with.

But the specific situation inside the house gave Han Li a certain feeling, and it was the word "messy."

All kinds of different items were piled here and there. Some were clothes, some were weapons such as knives and swords. But from the wave of spiritual power the weapons were giving off, they seemed to actually be pretty well-made magic tools.

Aside from these things, there were also some other daily items such as shovels and hammers. Those items were also giving off strong spiritual power, it seemed like the items had been refined into something like a magic tool. This broadened Han Li's horizons. What kind of special effect did these tools have?

At the center of the house, there was an eight-seater square table. Facing the door and sitting behind the table was an old man in gray clothes with fluffy hair. The old man ignored them as the two of them walked in the house, instead being focused on a small shiny knife, carving a yellow wood about the size of his palms that he held in his hands.

Martial Uncle Wang saw this, he frowned slightly, but his facial expression turned back to normal immediately. He didn't walk up and interrupt the old man working, instead he pulled a chair from the corner of the room, sat across the old man, and waited quietly for the old man to finish carving the wood.

Han Li blinked his eyes when he saw the situation and stood behind Martial Uncle Wang without saying a word while waiting sensibly with him.

The old man in gray was moving his hands fast like the wind while wood chips fell from in between his finger. After merely the time it took to make a cup of tea, a life-like little monkey appeared within his palms.

"Junior Martial Brother Lin's carving skills have improved a lot since the last time I saw you!" Martial Uncle Wang just then complimented while smiling.

"It's nothing impressive. I had nothing to do, so I was just killing time! How come Martial Brother Wang has the time to come and visit my humble residence?" The old man in gray said carelessly, but his eyes were already looking straight at Han Li and seemed to have guessed what the two of them were doing here.

"It's nothing too important, just wanted to get the equipments that all new disciples who join the valley's sect would receive for this Martial Nephew Han," he smiled and answered.

“Didn’t all the new disciples from the Immortal Ascension Assembly receive their equipments? How come there’s another one? And his aptitude is so poor! Did our Sect Leader Zhong’s standards really became that low, he would recruit someone so untalented into the valley!” The old man in gray said bluntly right in front of Han Li, making Han Li sound completely useless. From his tone of attitude, it doesn’t seemed like he respected the Sect Leader Zhong as much either.

Hearing this, Han Li naturally felt extremely awkward, and Martial Uncle Wang was also smiling bitterly.

He knew that because of what happened back then, this Junior Martial Brother Lin had been holding a grudge against their Senior Martial Brother, the Sect Leader, ever since. But in front of this junior, Han Li, how could he possibly pick on the young!

So, he coughed a little and changed the topic, “Junior Martial Brother, this Martial Nephew Han was the one who brought the Writ of Immortal Ascension and joined us in the Yellow Maple Valley! It counts as an exception, so his aptitude is not important. What’s important is that the sect needs to keep our promise.”

“The Writ of Immortal Ascension!” The old man in gray was very surprised and looked at Han Li once again.

“Tsk tsk! If you say so, then this fellow must have a lot of luck, and he can take a Foundation Establishment Pill?” The old man said with a loud voice and looked at him with a look that said, ‘fellow, you’re truly a lucky b*stard!’

“Hehe, normally that would be the case. But Martial Nephew Han and Martial Brother Ye made a deal, and he gave up this Foundation Establishment Pill automatically,” Martial Uncle Wang smiled and mentioned.

“Gave up the Foundation Establishment Pill?” The old man was startled at first, but for some reason his expression darkened right away, and after a moment of silent, he said something that surprised Han Li.

“It’s a good thing he could give it up! The most important thing about

being human is knowing your limits. Knowing what to give up and what to take at this young age, this quality is a lot stronger in him than in me!” The expression of the old man in gray seemed to be incredibly lonely. The expression in his eyes, which were originally cold, became more kind.

But after Han Li heard what the old man said, he was confused and didn't take it to heart!

‘Knowing your limits? That was because I had no choice, so I gave up the precious Foundation Establishment Pill! If it weren't so, who would give it up!’

Without Han Li mentioning the complaints his heart, the old man suddenly put on a straight face and stood up. He used his hands to lightly and continuously claw at the space around them. An item suddenly appeared in his hand, and the items kept increasing. The whole process stunned Han Li.

“A Yellow Silk Shirt, a Azure Leaf Magic Tool, an everyday refinery set, one Fierce Sun Sword and Cold Moon Saber each, and a tenfold storage pouch,” The old man listed all the items in his hands coldly and put them on the table.

“The items are all here. Little fellow, take them away! As for Martial Brother Wang, who is a busy person, I will not ask you to stay. Please see yourselves out!” After saying this, the old man took out another piece of wood from his chest, started sculpting once again, no longer paying attention to the two of them.

Seeing this, Martial Uncle Wang sighed, stopped saying anything else, and told Han Li to pick up the items. As soon as the two of them walked out of the stone house, the door automatically closed up with a loud bang!

Martial Uncle Wang looked at the shut door and shook his head. He then prepared to leave the place with Han Li.

“Oh! You don't have to carry that many items in your arms, just put them in your storage pouch!” Martial Uncle Wang turned around and saw Han Li carrying everything in his arms, standing like an idiot beside him. His foolish look amused him, so he spoke to remind him.

After Han Li heard what he said, he put the things in his arms on the ground and found the black cloth pouch among the items. “This is the tenfold storage pouch?” Han Li was a little confused!

He picked up the pouch, looked at the incredibly small opening, and then looked at the enormous swords and items. He hesitated a little since he didn’t know how to stuff them in the pouch.

“This is your first time using a storage pouch, so let me demonstrate!” Martial Uncle Wang was understanding. After he recognized Han Li’s confusion, he reached over and took the pouch.

“All you have to do is aim the opening of the pouch at what you want to put in, inject some magic power into the pouch, and focus on the item. It will be sucked in automatically!” Martial Uncle Wang said as he demonstrated it himself.

He pointed the opening downwards, and the white light in his hand flickered. A bright, white light shot out from the pouch and covered everything that was on the ground. Those items immediately shrunk under the white light, and as soon as they reached a certain size, they were sucked into the pouch. Han Li, who was watching on the side, was surprised and amazed!

“You use the same method when you want to take out an item. You just have to focus on the item that you want to take out with your magic power beforehand,” Martial Uncle Wang said as he returned the pouch to Han Li.

“But there are a few rules when it comes to using the storage pouch. Martial Nephew Han, you must remember them carefully!” Martial Uncle Wang put his hands behind his back and spoke seriously.

Hearing this, Han Li nodded like a chicken pecking rice.

“Firstly, the storage pouch can only hold and shrink a certain amount or size of items. If the pouch sucked in something that’s too big or too many in quantity, it will lose its ability, and you won’t be able to put more items inside of it anymore.”

“Secondly, the storage pouch cannot store living things. If you put a live creature inside it, then it will die for sure!”

“Lastly, and also the most important rule you must keep at heart: Low-grade storage pouches do not have the ability to recognize their owner, so whoever steals your storage pouch can take the items inside! Hence, don’t reveal your storage pouch easily in front of other cultivators. You should hide it carefully, or else you could get into serious trouble.”

Chapter 149: Chores

After Han Li heard these words, he naturally kept them in mind.

“Since you’ve received everything, come with me to see the cultivation guide disciple!” After Martial Uncle Wang said this, he brought Han Li to the flying magic tool and flew.

On this flight, the distance they traveled was far shorter. In a blink of an eye, they arrived at the foot of the mountain. There was a huge stone building built into the mountain. The stone sign on the front of the building had the words “Cultivation Guidance Pavilion” written in golden characters. It was quite busy with a few young disciples nearby, entering and exiting.

Martial Uncle Wang did not say anything this time and just walked in, taking the lead. Han Li closely followed behind. It was clear that a few disciples recognized this Martial Uncle Wang; they had continuously saluted and greeted him. Martial Uncle smiled with a nod. It seemed that his reputation in Yellow Maple Valley was truly quite good.

After entering the stone building, Han Li unexpectedly discovered that the back half of the Cultivation Guidance Pavilion actually extended into the depths of the mountain. Its interior was extremely vast and had rows of stone doors standing side by side with disciples both entering and exiting through them.

Just as Han Li thought to take a good look, Martial Uncle Wang pushed open the third room door on the right side and walked in heedlessly. This caused Han Li to hesitate somewhat; he did not know whether he should follow closely behind him.

“Come in!” Martial Uncle Wang did not have Han Li wait long. After a moment, he emerged from the doorway and called out to Han Li.

There weren’t many people in the room. Inside, there was a black-clothed disciple about thirty years old. He deferentially stood to the side of Martial Uncle Wang. After he saw Han Li enter, he kindly smiled toward him.

“This is Wu Feng; he is responsible for the cultivation techniques of new disciples. If you have any questions with regards to cultivation techniques in the future, you can ask him for guidance. With regards to understanding elementary cultivation techniques, Wu Feng is of the top ten!” Martial Uncle Wang’s words held great admiration toward this fellow.

“I request Senior Martial Brother Wu to give me much guidance in the future!” Han Li respectfully saluted. He clearly understood that this person would be his cultivation technique master in the future. How could he slight him!?

“Hehe! Martial Uncle praises me too much! In truth, I merely have a superficial, incomplete knowledge of cultivation techniques. I can exchange pointers with Junior Martial Han to gain understanding!” This Senior Brother Wu politely added.

“Martial Nephew Wu, I clearly understand your knowledge on cultivation techniques. There is no need to be too modest! I will hand over the matter of Martial Nephew Han’s cultivation technique to you. Currently, I simply brought him so the two of you can be acquainted. After that, I still have to bring him to other places to introduce him. He will not be present here for long!”

Martial Uncle Wang was quite straightforward. After he said those words, Elder Martial Brother Wu respectfully sent them off. They promptly departed from the room.

Next, this Martial Uncle Wang responsibly and diligently brought Han Li to several other essential places and introduced him to many Honored Disciples. Furthermore, he gave him an explanation of a few everyday matters to take notice of before returning him to the gray-clothed old man’s stone house. He had Han Li choose a stone room to live in before leaving Han Li and returning alone.

Han Li stood in front of the stone room he chose and sized up the simple and crude residence with a bitter smile.

At this moment, he already knew that so long as he trained his

foundation cultivation technique to the tenth layer, he would be able to leave and move to a residence in a place called the Mysterious Earth Mountain. The disciples there would have much more freedom! Not only could they establish their own residence on the mountain, but there were also no restrictions on the style and dimensions of the houses. Han Li could not help but look forward to this.

Although his cultivation technique had yet to reach the tenth layer, Han Li did not intend to stay at this stone house for long.

Afterwards, he lightly smiled and suddenly took out the flight Azure Leaf Magic Tool from his storage pouch. Then he poured magic power into the magic tool and tossed himself to the sky.

Initially, Han Li was unfamiliar with this object, and he flew abruptly from left to right, high to low. It wasn't smooth in the least. However, not long after, he easily mastered it and could fly similarly to Martial Uncle Wang, confidently and freely with his hands behind his back..

Although this magic tool was easy to master and simple to control, it was obvious that it wasn't very fast. It was only a bit faster than a steed. This was not surprising as the disciples in the valley only had so much power. Although the Azure Leaf Magic Tool was a bit lacking, it was still Han Li's first time flying. Hence, he exhilaratingly amused himself for quite a while.

"Hehe!" After a hearty laugh, Han Li satisfied his craving for flight and directed the magic tool toward a certain direction.

On the way, he brushed past several other disciples who were similarly flying. Perhaps it was because Han Li's face was quite unfamiliar, but the majority of these people looked at Han Li with several gazes of curiosity. However, when they saw that his cultivation technique was merely of the ninth layer, they disdainfully kept away.

Although Han Li saw these people's actions, he did not show anything in his face. Even so, he inwardly released a bitter laugh several times. It seemed that these so-called great sect cultivators were not any different from mortals of the secular world. They were just as snobbish!

Just as this thought passed through Han Li's mind, he arrived in front of a large building complex. Then, with large strides, he walked into a large hall with a sign that hung "Hundred Opportunities Hall".

Inside the hall was a middle-aged Honored Disciple. When he saw Han Li enter, he was somewhat surprised. He could not help but ask, "Junior Martial Brother Han, how did you return so quickly? What about Martial Uncle Wang?"

This was a place Martial Uncle Wang had just had hurriedly visited with Han Li. This was an Honored Disciple Han Li had just met. That was why when he saw Han Li return, he was greatly surprised.

"Senior Martial Brother Yu, when I arrived here a moment ago, I heard this was the place where one could receive chores work, right?"

"That's right! Could it be that Junior Martial Brother wants to receive an assignment so quickly? Junior Martial Brother Han is a new disciple. According to the rules, you can first familiarize yourself with the circumstances within the sect for a month before you receive a task. There is no need to feel so anxious!" The Honored Disciple spoke in astonishment.

"Hehe! That's no issue! I currently want to find something to do. Are there any plant-growing jobs that currently lack manpower?" Han Li faintly smiled.

"That is not how it works. All the missions that disciples receive are randomly distributed. Regardless of what you're up to, no one is allowed to select their duties! Only if they can prove that they truly have some respective ability in the field would they be given consideration!" This Honored Disciple replied, embarrassed.

When Han Li heard this, he creased his brow. Could it be he truly had to find Martial Uncle Ye?

"It doesn't matter. Have Martial Nephew Han choose as he wishes!" A somewhat familiar voice came from behind Han Li, slightly frightening him. He turned his head to look. It was unexpectedly that Old Man Ye; he did not know when he had stood behind him. He was smiling toward Han

Li.

“Hall Master has returned!” When the middle-aged Honored Disciple saw the old man, he immediately greeted him.

“En, I have returned!” The old man flippantly said.

“Martial Uncle Ye!” Han Li immediately greeted him with respect.

“Hehe, Martial Nephew Han came here quite quickly! I returned here to give my subordinates an explanation to let Martial Nephew Han select his tasks at will!” He half-jokingly mentioned. It seemed that this Martial Uncle Ye’s mood was pretty good.

“I am thankful for Martial Uncle’s concern! I also came to take a look. Could I inconvenience Martial Uncle to find a suitable task?” Han Li asked, apparently bashful.

“I am the one in charge here. What inconvenience is there? Honored Disciple Yu, take out all the plant-growing tasks and let Han Li choose as he wishes!” The old man magnanimously waved his hand, signalling his subordinate to follow his orders.

This Honored Disciple Yu was dumbstruck by those words. After he took a deep glance toward Han Li, he hurriedly looked for the scrolls that recorded the chore tasks. In his mind, he could not help but think that he had some sort of relationship with his superior.

“The plant-growing tasks are all listed here. Take a careful look, Junior Martial Brother Han!” Honored Disciple Yu offered him the azure jade slips he returned with.

Han Li said a word of thanks and took the slips. He earnestly looked through them.

“Look after the thirteen Five Flower Trees. Every year, each of them produces two white fruits.”

“With great care, take care of the 300 year-old Fire Cloud Ginseng. Ensure that its spiritual nature is not lost.”

“Grow a field of Moon Plum Grass. Hand over a hundred jin of its hay

every season.”

(TL: Jin 斤 = .5kg)

“Look after the Yellow Jade Bamboo Forest,....”

.....

The slips had all kinds of plant-growing work. There was truly a great amount! However, there were still a few that had yet to be read by Han Li. When he rummaged through the rest of the slips, a task much to Han Li’s satisfaction was found.

(TL: The 坤 Kun in 玄坤山 Mysterious Earth Mountain is one of the Eight Trigrams ䷁, it representing Earth.)

Chapter 150: Reluctant Consent

“Take over the Azure Stone Mountain Range’s Hundred Medicine Garden. Requires a set amount of rare drug ingredients to be handed over every year.”

When Han Li saw the gold characters written on the slip, Han Li was extremely joyful. He raised his head toward Honored Disciple Yu and pointed to the slip, saying, “I desire this task. Senior Martial Brother Yu, could you present this to me?”

After he heard Han Li’s words, Honored Disciple Yu pieced together a smile. But once he clearly saw the task Han Li had picked, the cheerful smile on his face became forced.

“Junior Martial Brother, please pick another task. This garden task is extremely difficult. It doesn’t suit Junior Martial Brother!” Honored Disciple Yu very sincerely said. However, when he saw Han Li’s puzzled appearance, he further explained, “Ever since the task was hung here several years ago, many have already attempted to compete it. However, all of them failed. Not only did they fail to receive an award, they were fined a great number of spirit stones. It could be said to be one of the most difficult tasks here. Even if Junior Martial Brother Han is joking, each disciple I assigned this slip to were quite talented in growing plants!”

After Han Li heard these words, he inwardly laughed. However, after some contemplation, he did not plan to give up. He modestly asked, “Could Senior Martial Brother tell me, in what way is this task difficult? How could there be no Senior Martial Brother that completed it? Isn’t it just supervising the medicinal herbs in the garden? How is this hard?”

“Could it be that Martial Nephew chose Senior Martial Brother Ma’s medicine garden assignment?” The nearby Old Man Ye after heard these two’s dialog, did not wait for the middle-aged Honored Disciple to reply. He wrinkled his brow and rushed to interrupt them.

“That’s right! Junior Martial Brother Han took a fancy to Senior Martial

Uncle Ma's extremely difficult assignment." The middle-aged Honored Disciple did not know whether to laugh or cry.

After the old man heard this, he wore an enigmatic smile.

"Haha! Martial Nephew Han truly knows how to choose! He actually fancied the most troublesome task! However, this task truly causes one's head to ache! There have already been a great many who were forced to receive this assignment and complained to me before. However, because Senior Martial Brother Ma was not willing to easily alter the conditions of rewards and penalties, I could not do anything! If Martial Nephew Han wishes to know the details of this task, he can follow me into the hall and take a look at the relevant files. It is much more compelling than hearing from the word of mouth!" It was unknown why this Hundred Opportunities Hall's Hall Master Ye was so forthright toward Han Li. He went as far as to open the door for him in passing.

Han Li inwardly wrinkled his brow. This Martial Uncle Ye was a bit too enthusiastic! Although he had given his Foundation Establishment pill to him, it had seemed to be an equal trade. Why was he acting so intimately toward him?

Han Li strongly pushed aside the suspicions in his mind and put up an appearance of being overwhelmed by Martial Uncle Ye's favor toward him. Then he followed the old man who took the slip to some room at the back of the main hall. All sorts of files were piled up in the room.

The old man lightly waved his arm with the slip in his hand. Then the slip flashed, and a scroll flew toward into his hand. He offered the scroll to Han Li.

Since he was already being offered, Han Li impolitely took the scroll and quickly rifled through it.

The scroll's contents weren't long. It simply contained the written accounts of the disciples who were assigned to take care of the medicine garden. That was why Han Li looked through them quickly. A short moment later, he mostly understood the details and difficulty of the assignment.

“How about it? You should change to another assignment! Although this task’s rewards are quite generous, it isn’t something an ordinary disciple can accomplish.” Martial Uncle Ye said with great concern.

After Han Li heard those words, he muttered to himself for a moment. He firmly shook his head, “Many thanks to Martial Uncle Ye! However, this task is much to my liking. I don’t need to switch to another assignment, because I am picking it!”

When the old man heard the determination in Han Li’s words, he felt somewhat amazed. However, he said nothing else and nodded, giving his consent. He then immediately brought Han Li out of the room. After a moment of hesitation, he somewhat unnaturally added, “Martial Nephew Han, with regards to the goods agreed from our deal with the Foundation Establishment Pill, could their delivery be slightly postponed? Martial Uncle has been recently wanting to refine a Qi Gathering Pill. What I have at hand is truly rather limited. I fear it wouldn’t be too convenient for me. However Martial Nephew, please feel at ease. I will be able to repay my debt in full within a year.”

When Han Li heard these words, he was surprised for a moment. However, he immediately smiled.

“What is Martial Uncle Ye saying? Since it is inconvenient for Martial Uncle, I can give as much time as he needs. There is no need to bring up the matter of repayment in the future. This could be considered filial respect given to Martial Uncle from the younger generation.”

Han Li felt that currently he was acting truly falsely. His heart was undoubtedly depressed, and he loathed the other party’s breach of their promise. However, his face wore a smiling expression and said the words that would make the other party happy. ‘This is probably brought about by the young one’s grief!’ Old Man Ye bitterly thought.

“What meaning do Martial Nephew’s words hold? Could it be that you believe this elder is one who breaks his promises and doesn’t keep his words? This elder won’t cheat Martial Nephew of the promised items even the slightest!” When Old Man Ye heard Han Li’s words, not only was

he unhappy, he had also stiffened his face and wore an expression of honor. His appearance expressed that he wouldn't do such actions of lowly character.

Hearing this, Han Li's reluctant smile nearly fell apart!

This elder's face was quite thick. He obviously intended to renege on the majority of goods; even so, he insisted on keeping up the false appearance of uprightly keeping his promise. He was truly a typical hypocrite!

Han Li repeatedly restrained himself and incessantly cursed inwardly. However, his face's smile was slightly delayed. He changed his expression to one of sincerity, and used a tone of voice even he found sickening to say, "Martial Uncle is blaming this younger generation wrongly! Actually, Martial Nephew thought that since Martial Nephew had just entered the sect, the promised items were far too extravagant for this junior. As a result, Martial Uncle would temporarily withhold the majority of goods so that this junior would not use waste them."

After hearing Han Li's empty words, Old Man Ye's expression was eased. He faintly nodded his head and said, "Martial Nephew Han's words truly have some sense! If a newly admitted disciple became too dependant on these mere worldly possessions, it would truly hinder his cultivation! Then let us act according to your words. The majority of the goods will temporarily be left with me. If you have a need for them in the future, do not hesitate to come take them!"

"Then thank you for your trouble, Martial Uncle!" Han Li wore a strong smile and consoled his heart repeatedly. These were merely worldly possessions. He couldn't afford to offend the old man in front of him! Later, when there was an opportunity, he would definitely return to collect both principal and interest.

"Hehe, this is nothing! Let us go!" The old man's mood seemed to turn for the better.

The following matter was much easier. With this Martial Uncle Ye's assistance, Han Li smoothly went through all the formalities and took the jade medallion, representing his assignment. Then he was

enthusiastically led by an Honored Disciple to the Azure Stone Mountain Range's Hundred Medicine Garden.

Old Man Ye stood at the entrance of the Hundred Opportunities Hall and saw Han Li's figure gradually fly off to the distance. His complexion was gloomy as he remained silent. It seemed he was thinking of something.

"Has Junior Martial Brother Ye's heart gone soft?" A deep voice suddenly came from behind him.

"It is not a question of whether my heart has gone soft. Rather, using these methods to deal with a disciple that had just entered the sect feels somewhat improper. Not only does this Martial Nephew Han say one thing, he inwardly thinks another. He may report this to Sect Master!" The old man didn't say anything else, but his words carried a faint unease.

"Hehe, report?" The person behind him sneered.

"What? Is Senior Martial Brother Wu not uneasy?" Old Man Ye eventually turned around, saying these words to a somber Senior Martial Brother Wu.

"What is there to worry about? This boy is not aware of the arrangements we made beforehand. Say that the goods were left with you. Don't say that you won't give it to him but that they were temporarily in your care! What reason would there be to report?" Martial Brother Wu said, having thought it out.

"However, I quite admire this boy! His age is young, yet he understands when to advance or retreat. This is remarkable! If he didn't have such poor aptitude with his false spiritual roots, I would have truly felt the notion to have him enter the sect!" Martial Brother Wu continued, his face exposing an appearance of regret.

"Luckily, this person doesn't have a rigid way of thinking, otherwise we would have to use a different trick. That would be far more inconvenient!" Old Man Ye said leisurely.

“Enough, there is nothing to be uneasy about this boy! Us two will pinch our noses and think of him like we would think of an ant. Junior Martial Brother Ye need not waste so much money. However, don’t forget what we agreed on in advance!” Senior Martial Brother Wu suddenly changed the topic. His words also held some hidden meaning.

“I will not forget. I will give you half of this newly refined Qi Gathering Pill. Ke! To tell the truth, if my grandnephew wasn’t in the middle of becoming Foundation Establishment and required the assistance of large quantities of precious medicine pills, I truly would not have such thick face to trick a junior in this way!” Old Man Ye lightly shook his head, looking like he lost his integrity with age.

When Old Man Wu heard these words, he smiled and did not speak. With great satisfaction, he thought to himself, “Since this Junior Martial Brother Ye has just committed an underhanded act, it could be considered something I could use to handle him. I don’t have to worry about discussing business with him in the future. He will not oppose me.”

Chapter 151: Hundred Medicine Garden

Even though Han Li didn't know what Martial Uncle Ye and the Old Man Wu talked about after he left, he felt extremely upset!

Ever since he went through with what happened with Doctor Mo, it was the first time he encountered a situation where he knew there would be trouble ahead but had no choice but to jump into the mess. This made Han Li very annoyed, but also reinforced his opinion that the weak were also the prey to the strong in the cultivating world.

"If you have a need for them in the future, do not hesitate to come and collect them!" The thought of this made Han Li laugh coldly. In the future, he would make sure to let Martial Uncle Ye know that his belongings would not be taken away that easily!

He stood on the ground and looked afar as the Honor Disciple turned to the Hundred Opportunities Hall. Because the Hundred Medicine Garden was not far ahead, the owner of the medicine garden set up some small restrictive formations on the small valley in between the two hills to keep outsiders from intruding.

Han Li came across some of the nearby restrictions after walking for a small distance. His path was blocked by a white light.

However, he didn't panic. Instead he raised a piece of jade tablet and shined it in front of him. A green light immediately shot out from the tablet and into the restrictions. Han Li then waited patiently.

"Come in!" A dry voice came from inside, but it sounded if the source was right by Han Li's ears. Then, the restrictions in front of him all disappeared, melted away like snow.

Seeing this, Han Li didn't dare to linger and walked inside with haste.

Following the small path in front of him, Han Li stopped at a courtyard with a plaque that read "Hundred Medicine Garden." The courtyard was at least a few acres large. Before he even entered the courtyard, a thick smell of medical herbs came from inside and aroused Han Li's spirit.

“What are you doing standing outside like an idiot? Hurry up and come inside, I still need to go out for errands!” Han Li was startled, but immediately followed the order and walked in.

Standing inside, Han Li was then able to clearly see the situation inside the garden.

In the center of the garden stood a few cottages built from hay and bamboo. The garden itself was surrounded by trenches that were squared out evenly. Each field were filled with greens, and there were many medicinal herbs that Han Li knew of or was familiar with, and some that looks like strangely-shaped plants, making the entire garden’s Spiritual Qi overflow. Even when a cultivator like Han Li took a deep breath, it felt extremely refreshing.

“Come into the house!” The owner of the voice saw him dawdling and seemed to become a little impatient.

Han Li smiled lightly, and didn’t take it to heart as he walked into the cottage.

Inside the cottage stood a short, skinny old man. He looked at Han Li, who had just come in, with dissatisfaction. From the old man’s looks, he seemed to be around fifty years old. He had a withered and yellow small mustache and a pair of cloudy, small eyes that were rolling around. At first glance, he truly looked like a big rat that had successfully become human.

“You’re the disciple that the Hundred Opportunities Hall sent to take care of the garden? You’re too young, and your skills are too poor! Is the fellow surnamed Ye brushing me off? How come the people he sent are worse and worse every time?” The small, skinny old man’s face darkened when he saw Han Li’s appearance, and he started ranting.

“Disciple Han Li greets Senior Martial Elder Ma!” Han Li already knew from the records about the small, old man’s strange temper, so he wasn’t too surprised about it, and immediately went up and bowed.

“Hmph! Do you know how serious you will be punished if you cannot complete your mission? It’s not too late to go back and tell my Junior

Martial Brother to send another person!" The small, old man rolled his eyes and snapped.

"The medicine garden must be maintained, the medicinal herbs must not die, and every month a certain amount of medicinal herbs must be delivered! If that's all, Junior is quite confident!" Han Li doesn't seem to be shaken.

Hearing what Han Li said, the old man was a bit surprised. It was the first time he met a garden-managing disciple who confident from the start. He looked and judged Han Li once again, but the doubtful expression in his eyes didn't lessen.

"You, come with me!" The small, old man suddenly barked coldly and walked out of the cottage. Han Li followed him without any hesitation.

"How many of these medicinal herb can you recognize?" The small, old man pointed at the plants in the garden and stared at Han Li with slanted eyes.

"One of of ten." Han Li quickly swept his eyes across the garden, and replied softly.

Hearing Han Li's words, the small, old man hesitated a little but laughed coldly right away,

"Little fellow, if you truly can recognize one out of ten of the medicinal herbs, I will let you manage the garden and will not utter another word!"

With that said, Han Li smiled slightly and left the side of the small, old man.

"Midnight Flower, Yellow Ball Grass, White Crane Flower, Full Moon Grass..." Han Li took a walk in the garden while casually calling out the names of the medicinal herbs that he was familiar with.

At first, the small, old man was looking at him mockingly, but after listening for a while, his face expressed amazement. Han Li mentioned a lot of medicinal herbs that were not well-known, and for some of them, even he had to put a lot of work to know the efficacy of the remedy. Han Li's response surprised him.

“Enough!” Han Li had just finished telling less than half of the plants he knew when the small, old man spoke and stopped Han Li’s ‘performance.’

“Very good, looks like you’re not completely bragging! This medicine garden will be in your management for now. This is the restrictive medallion. Take care of it!” The old man’s expression showed satisfaction as he dexterously took out a dark-green wooden tablet and threw it to Han Li.

“Inside the house are some notes on my years of experience years with growing medicinal herbs. You need to take a good look at them since you’re still not familiar with most of the herbs. Don’t kill them!” The old man touched his mustache and exhorted.

“Thank you for Senior Martial Elder’s reminder. This disciple will keep it in mind!” Han Li said respectfully.

“Cough! I hope your ability is as useful as your mouth, that way I can truly be free from this medicine garden, and not delay this Elder’s cultivation any longer. This medicine garden is Elder’s private garden, so if you really can take on this job, Elder will not mistreat you. But I must warn you beforehand, if you can’t do it, then get out as soon as possible and have someone replace you. Do you understand?” The old man said with both kindness and severity.

Hearing his blunt words, not only did Han Li not get mad, he also grew more fond of him. He thought that the old man was a lot better than that Martial Uncle Ye. At the very least, the old man wasn’t a hypocrite. So he quickly nodded and said ‘yes.’

After briefing on a few things that needed attention when managing the garden, the small, old man then went back into the cottage, packed up in a hurry, and left the garden by flying without looking back.

Watching Senior Martial Elder Ma as he left, Han Li randomly picked a cottage, cleaned it up, and made it his room.

Because he had been busy the whole day and didn’t had the chance to rest, even a cultivator like Han Li would feel tired, so he climbed onto the bed and went to sleep.

To him, even if something huge were about to happen outside, it would not be too late to solve it after he regained his energy. The sky went dark just in time.

The first day Han Li joined the Yellow Maple Valley as a new disciple passed without any twists and turns. On the second day, when Han Li finally woke up feeling energized, his path to cultivation officially began.

During the following days, Han Li spent the mornings studying the notes the old man left for him. At night, he secretly buried the mysterious little bottle in a corner of the medicinal herb field and covered it up with destroyed magic treasure fragment that he exchanged for a high price to conceal the prodigious sign of it absorbing the Spiritual Qi.

And just like that, besides that corner having a thicker Spiritual Qi than other places, there was nothing else that would catch people's attention. This put Han Li's cautious heart at ease.

Martial Uncle Ye brought the so-called 'compensation items' for the Foundation Establishment Pill a few days later to Han Li, but he only gave Han Li less than one fifth of what they originally agreed on. As for what happened with the pill, this Hall Master Ye seemed to have forgotten already, and Han Li also pretended like it never happened.

But even so, Han Li still became rich all of the sudden over one night. He received two mid-grade spirit stones, dozens of low-grade spirit stones, three well-made magic tools, and several talismans.

Chapter 152: Two Years Later

This was the first time Han Li had seen mid-grade spirit stones. One was a fire attribute spirit stone with a sparkling red light. Another was a dark-yellow earth attribute spirit stone. These were the most commonly seen mid-grade spirit stones.

They looked to be entirely different from the faint attributes of those low-grade spirit stones. It wasn't their luster that was different, but rather that their spiritual ripples were much stronger. It was impossible for one to be mistaken as low-grade.

In addition, those three magic tools were quite good. Naturally, the goods refined by a Foundation Establishment expert did not lose to the low quality goods Han Li had seen at the Great South Meeting. Indeed, they were far more powerful.

One of them seemed to be a ring made of fine steel. When casting it, it would automatically fly out and bind an enemy. Within a certain distance, it could freely change its size. Han Li became interested in it and poured all the magic power in his body into the ring. The ring actually emitted a faint yellow light and expanded to the size of the inside of the cottage, causing Han Li to be speechless.

Another magic tool was a pitch-black pole with a small triangular flag. This magic tool was not simple to use. So long as spiritual power was poured into the flag, with a wave, it would immediately turn into a cloud of black fog, causing the enemy's spiritual sight to fail and conceal the tracks of the user. It was a great defensive magic tool.

These two magic tools were first-rate goods rarely seen in the outside world. Although this caused Han Li to initially be wild with joy, he still had the final auxiliary-type magic tool. It was a brass bottle that prevented the spiritual power of any object it stored from dissipating

When Han Li held this bottle magic tool, he immediately thought of his problem with preserving the mysterious green liquid.

Ever since Han Li found out about the existence of spiritual power, he

had long suspected that the small bottle absorbed and condensed the natural Spiritual Qi of Heaven and Earth during the night. Previously, he hadn't any appropriate means to confirm this, so he could only bury these assumptions in the depths of his heart.

With the appearance of this yellow bottle magic tool, he could finally had a method of confirming his assumptions. As a result, on that evening, he stored the condensed green liquid into the brass bottle to test whether the brass bottle could retain the green liquid.

However, the result left him greatly disappointed.

The brass bottle could only preserve the green liquid for a time, extending its use from its original quarter hour to a full day. Past this time limit, the green liquid in the bottle would disappear without a trace. It seemed this liquid was not at all so simple as Spiritual Qi condensed from Heavens and Earth. There was certain to be something more complicated mixed within.

After this test, Han Li knew more about his present situation, but he was unable to easily answer this riddle at his current stage. Thus, he no longer troubled himself to think of this question and intended to drift with the waves in the future, letting nature take its course. In any case, the present function of this small bottle would give Han Li endless benefits.

Having let go of the matter that was gnawing at his mind, Han Li began to efficiently use the green liquid and produced batches of Yellow Dragon Pellets and Gold Essence Pills. He prepared these medicine pills, which had previously lost much of their effectiveness, while trying to find the recipes of more spiritually potent medicine pills within the valley.

However, Han Li clearly understood that this matter was not urgent.

If a new disciple that had just entered the sect were to go asking about for medicine pill recipes so conspicuously, he would undoubtedly be telling others that he was hiding something! He mustn't arouse the suspicions of others, thereby bringing about his own misfortune.

As a result, Han Li prepared to take a true, years-long secluded

cultivation until he thoroughly understood the inner affairs of the sect. When he was no longer a newcomer to Yellow Maple Valley and no one would pay notice of him, he would reconsider the problem of acquiring recipes.

As for the medicine ingredients Han Li must hand over regularly, he need not worry. With the assistance of the diluted green liquid, how could the medicinal herbs not ripen overnight? This was a completely trivial matter. He had already intended to live in the medicine garden for a long time. Surely that Martial Elder Ma wouldn't have anything against it.

Thus, every day, Han Li busily attended his regular affairs.

During the day, after he finished looking through the small old man's notes, he would diligently run towards the cultivation guidance disciple, Wu Feng, and learn quite a few incantations for practical elementary magic techniques.

In addition, Han Li would eat large amounts of those Yellow Dragon Pellets and Gold Essence Pills on a daily basis as if they were sweets. According to Han Li's thoughts, since quality is out of the question, he would have to offset this by relying on quantity! If these medicinal pills were like little drops creating an ocean, there would be results.

Like that, time passed by! Unwittingly, Han Li became a member of one of the great seven cultivation sects, Yellow Maple Valley, and remained there for two years.

Within these two years, many things had happened. The sect's ten-year recruitment period began not long after Han Li's secluded cultivation. From noteworthy cultivator clans of all sizes, over a thousand youths with acceptable spiritual roots entered the Yellow Maple Valley Sect. There were even two siblings among them that both possessed mutated spiritual roots. In addition these mutated spiritual roots were thunder spiritual roots, which were widely known for their destructive power.

When these two brothers appeared, they greatly attracted the attention of the valley's upper echelon. Even a Core Formation expert who had long secluded himself made an exception to leave and observe their bones. He

publically declared that so long as these two were capable of reached Foundation Establishment, he would stop his seclusion to personally instruct these two brothers.

When this was stated, their fellow martial brothers were greatly envious. However, aside from those two, there were also several other disciples who were geniuses with rare aptitudes.

For example, a youth from a small clan surnamed Li had unexpectedly reached the peak of the ninth layer in his foundation cultivation technique at the age of twelve without having previously taking any medicine pills. It could be said he improved surprisingly fast. He wasn't at all inferior to those who possessed mutated spiritual roots.

A different, eight year-old boy surnamed Wang was even more extreme. Not only was he a direct descendant of the great Wang Clan, his innate "Profound Yin Eyes" could actually cultivate the long lost "Eyes Imposing Deity's Light". It could restrain all ghosts and phantoms in the entire world.

Of course, apart from those two, there were also several other outstanding talents that were far greater than ordinary disciples. With the recruitment of these top disciples, it could be considered a grand harvest, causing Sect Master Zhong to be unable to conceal his happiness for several days. Many individuals believed that the sect had caught the Heavens' attention and was being placed above the other sects!

However when others came to the valley, they found that the strongest of the seven great sects, the "Masked Moon Sect" had actually received a young woman with heavenly spiritual roots. This caused the recently proud Great Sect Master Zhong to become speechless for half a day.

However, regardless of what was said, this batch of newly accepted disciples attracted the attention of many within the sect. The low-level disciples who had been accepted slightly earlier talked about their talented Martial Juniors every day. When their foundation cultivation technique improved, who knew what they were capable of!

Thus, underneath these many dazzling rays of light, Han Li, who

entered the sect with the Writ of Immortal Ascension, was thoroughly forgotten by Sect Master Zhong and all the other stewards.

Having also spent his entire day running around the medicine garden without going out of his way to see others, a pitifully few amount of disciples recognized him. Perhaps only that cultivation guidance disciple Wu Feng and the Hundred Opportunities Hall's Honored Disciple Yu occasionally remembered Han Li. After all, those two met him when he asked for guidance toward cultivation techniques or when he received spirit stones each month.

Regardless of how others regarded him, Han Li was currently very satisfied with cultivating in half seclusion. In addition, the small old man who collected medicine ingredients every several months was very pleased! After all, Han Li was able to hand over the required goods on time. Where else could he find a garden caretaker that wouldn't fall behind on his payments?

Thus, in order to hold onto this genius garden caretaker Han Li, the old man gave greater and greater spirit stone rewards. From the original two low-grade spirit stones, he eventually rose to a monthly five spirit stones, causing Han Li to become a large earner among low-level disciples. It should be known that the average income of ordinary disciples was only three spirit stones per month. This further greatened Han Li's impression of Martial Senior Ma.

As for that reneging Great Hall Master Ye, who embezzled more than half of his goods, rumors had it that the grandnephew whom he put his hopes into was not able to achieve Foundation Establishment after taking the Foundation Establishment Pill. His grandnephew helplessly stayed at the peak of Qi Condensation, greatly vexing him. When Han Li heard of this, he inwardly laughed and immediately felt his mood improve considerably.

Furthermore, after pushing down countless medicine pills, Han Li's Eternal Spring Arts tenaciously broke through two layers in succession, finally entering the eleventh layer and causing him to obtain a medium rank among low-level disciples in the valley. Also, the Yellow Dragon

Pellet and Gold Essence Pill had completely lost their effectiveness. Although he consumed many of them, there were no more results!

With this, Han Li had no choice but to advance his plan and find other medicine pills.

Fortunately at this moment, there wasn't anybody in the valley that was interested in a nobody like him. So long as he was a bit careful, his actions would not attract attention.

Chapter 153: Yue Lu Hall

Han Li stood on a stone platform halfway up the Great Shaman's Mountain. Several zhang wide, the stone platform was a huge Immortal's abode entirely covered by a spell formation: Yue Lu Hall.

(TL: 岳麓 Yue Lu of Yue Lu hall, means the base of a tall mountain)

This "Yue Lu Hall" was the Yellow Maple Valley's specialized storage for magic tools, medicine pill recipes, and secret technique manuals. In addition, it offered all sorts of assistance for pill and magic tool refining as well as a few common raw materials. It could be regarded as one of the most important places in the sect. Thus, not only was it covered in many layers of spell formations, but it was also patrolled by over a hundred disciples in case outside enemies invaded. It was also said that there was a Core Formation martial ancestor secluded within, keeping watch all year in case other great experts were to invade this place.

After Han Li went over the relevant information in his mind, he calmly walked forward.

Just as he landed, there were several gazes that sized him up from a secret location. However, upon seeing Han Li's magic power was ordinary, they quickly vanished. Even if it were merely that, Han Li was secretly startled.

Since Han Li was unable to respond to these people, they demonstrated that they either had first-rate concealment magic tools or their magic power was truly above his, which meant that they were elite disciples of the twelfth layer or above. How could this not cause Han Li to be even more cautious!

After walking forward several steps, he stopped. Then he softly chanted several verses and raised his hand, releasing a stream of red light toward the seemingly empty space in front of him.

As a result, the empty space fluctuated for a moment, and a wall of light appeared with a flash of red light, blocking him. Immediately after, two disciples wearing red clothes appeared behind the wall of light.

“Were you the one who triggered the restrictive spell?” A red-clothed disciple coldly asked.

“This one is Han Li, I...”

“Do we care who you are? Since you haven’t reached Foundation Establishment, you need a sponsor! Bring out the token of trust of one who vouches for you!” The disciple explained, impatiently interrupting Han Li.

After Han Li heard those impolite words, he did not angry. He took out a jade talisman from his bosom and set it down on the ground in front of the wall of light.

At this time, the cold-mouthed red-clothed disciple held his hand against wall of light. A hole the size of a hand appeared in the wall.

The other red-clothed disciple who had yet to speak lightly waved his hand, causing Han Li’s jade talisman to fly like a small wing through the hole and into his hand.

“Senior Martial Brother Ma is your sponsor?” The red-clothed disciple who looked at the jade talisman exclaimed, somewhat astonished.

“It truly is a token of trust that Martial Senior Ma has given to my humble self.” Han Li honestly replied. However, he was shocked from his heart. The age of these two red-clothed men weren’t very old. However, they were actually Foundation Establishment experts. This had greatly shocked him!

It should be known that in a cultivation sect, status was not determined by seniority. Status was determined by the depths of their cultivation. After all, the path of cultivation could only be tread by the strong!

“That Senior Brother Ma who is obsessed with refining pills all day?” The red-clothed disciple at the side asked in surprise.

“That’s right, he even vouches for people? This is truly shocking! Are you his personal disciple or a blood relative or something else entirely?” The red-clothed disciple holding the jade talisman, repeatedly asked with curiosity.

“No, this junior simply takes care of his medicine garden on Martial Senior Ma’s behalf. For this token of trust, this disciple has agreed to look after the garden for free for a year!” Han Li currently didn’t dare to slight them and respectfully replied with a bitter smile.

What he said was completely true.

Actually, when Han Li began to plan to acquire pill recipes, he thought that because this Martial Senior Ma planted so many medicinal herbs, he would have conducted a great amount of research on pill concoction. He was certain to have many medicine pill recipes on hand! That was why several months before, Han Li took advantage of the period when the small old man arrived to take the medicine ingredients and made a few indirect inquiries.

The result caused Han Li’s eye’s to become foolish-eyed. When the small old man heard these words, he immediately shook his head as if he were beating a drum with it. Regardless of what Han Li said, he was rejected. According to this Martial Senior Ma, his pill recipes were the results of the experience of a pill refining master’s countless failures. How could he possibly give them to others that casually? It was unconditionally impossible!

However, when Han Li earnestly explained that he only wanted those original, unaltered pill recipes, the small old man looked at him and impatiently told Han Li in a blunt manner to go to Yue Lu Hall and find them himself. Why should he be inconvenienced in such a way to help him? Like that, Han Li was forced to work a year for free in exchange for the small old man’s token of trust and was able to presently come to Yue Lu Hall.

“Hehe! It turned out to be like that. I was under the impression of the rumor that Senior Brother Ma’s temper suddenly changed!” After the two red-clothed men listened, they looked at each other with a smile. These words were spoken with a snicker by the one holding the jade talisman.

“Alright, you may enter!”

The red-clothed men simultaneously cast a spell on the wall of light,

causing the wall of light to rigidly squeeze open a zhang-wide passage. It was just enough for one person to pass through.

When Han Li saw this, he hesitated for a moment. Then his figure immediately flashed, and he was within the wall.

After he entered the wall of light, something caused him to become greatly surprised.

When he was outside, because of the red wall of light's obstruction, Han Li was not able to see the interior. Now that he was inside, apart from a small circular spell formation, he saw that the mountain was unexpectedly bare; there weren't any buildings at all, causing Han Li to be incomparably puzzled!

"Take care of this jade talisman. Every time you come here, there will be a routine inspection. That is the rule here." After they released their spell on the wall of light, the person who examined the token of trust returned the jade talisman to Han Li.

"Many thanks to these two martial uncles!" Han Li withdrew his curious glances and saluted as respectfully as he could. He hoped to give these two men a good impression of him. After all, he would be returning here often in the future.

"En, follow me!"

It was obvious Han Li's inclination was not in vain. These two's expressions grew much more mild. After all, the majority of those who came here were disciples of the same generation. Naturally they wouldn't be as overly courteous as Han Li, causing the two to have a favorable impression towards Han Li.

"However, Martial Nephew Han, why did you want to come to this Yue Lu hall? Regardless of whether one is starting to refine pills or magic tools, it would be best to wait until one is Foundation Establishment. You've come here a bit too early!" One of the red-clothed men asked. At this time, these two men were bringing Han Li towards the circular spell formation.

“This junior simply witnessed Martial Senior Ma refine many pills. He also saved a few raw materials while caring for the garden. That was why he wished to test his luck and see whether or not he may find a suitable recipe to refine a few medicine pills to progress his cultivation. After all, Martial Nephew’s aptitude is truly poor and can only rely on external power.” Han Li replied half truthfully, deliberately falling behind the two people half a step.

“So it’s like that! However, Martial Nephew shouldn’t be too hopeful. After you enter, you will understand my meaning.” The other man lightly shook his head, not very optimistic of Han Li’s goal.

At this time, the three had already walked in front the circular spell formation. Then a red-clothed person indicated Han Li to stand in the middle of the spell formation. The two stood to the left and right of the spell formation.

“Usually, the use of this transportation formation requires the payment of a low-grade spirit stone. However since it is Martial Nephew’s first time, we will exempt you this time. Next time, however, we will be completely acting in accordance to the rules.” One of the men said with a weak smile.

Just as those words were uttered, the two men each released a stream of red light toward the spell formation in an extremely practiced manner. Then the several spirit stones imbedded in the formation shined brightly.

Without having the chance to thank the two, he suddenly felt the sky spin and saw his surround scenery to become, indistinct. Then a brilliant light flashed and Han Li arrived in an unfamiliar hall. He was currently standing in a spell formation exactly like the one he had used before.

‘So this was the rumored transportation formation. Truly wonderful!’ Han Li inwardly exclaimed in astonishment. After his feelings of discomfort from the formation faded away, he swept his gaze across the large, extraordinary hall.

Chapter 154: Elder Xu and the Scripture Storage

The hall Han Li stood in was very peculiar. The cylindrical-shaped, enormous room was roughly more than thirty zhang wide and four to five zhang tall. The green stone wall surrounding the area had light-red crystals embedded within, and on the floor there was a thin layer of white sand, which made the whole hall seem clean and tidy.

But if someone were to look up, they would be stunned to find white stalactites hanging down everywhere from the ceiling. This place was actually a stalactite cave, and it was slightly transformed by people into how it looked like today.

Surrounding the hall were three evenly-spaced tunnels. Two of the tunnels were marked with the character “Tool 器” and the character “Pill 丹.” There was nothing carved on the last tunnel, nor were there any labels nearby.

Since there was no one in the hall at the moment, Han Li swept his eyes across the room, hesitated a little, and went to the tunnel with the character “Pill 丹” carved at its entrance.

The tunnel wasn't long. After more than ten steps and a turn, a slightly larger house appeared at the end of the tunnel. In the house there was a long table, and an old man with his face glowing stood beside the table as he looked at Han Li with a big grin.

And behind the table, there were several old, worn out shelves against the wall, the tops covered with cauldron furnaces, raw materials, and some other random, strange items that Han Li had never heard of before.

The old man, smiling broadly, spoke before Han Li could say anything, “Young Friend, you look unfamiliar. It's your first time here, isn't it! Less and less new faces are coming to this damned place! An old fellow like me is already tired of all these stiff, old faces here. It's great to see a younger, new face!” The old man shook his head and said with a welcoming tone.

Han Li already realized that the Heaven Eye's Technique didn't work on the old man. He couldn't tell the depth of the old man's cultivation, which meant that the old man was another expert of Foundation Establishment. How could Han Li dare to ignore him!

And so, he immediately paid his respects and said, "Junior greets Senior Martial Uncle. This is Martial Nephew's first time here at Yue Lu Hall. Senior Martial Uncle please point me in the right direction!" Han Li humbled himself before this senior.

"Young Friend, if you have any questions, just ask. Also, I am surnamed Xu. Call me Senior Uncle Xu or Elder Xu. Don't call me Senior Martial Uncle. An old fellow like me doesn't like hearing that!" The Elder immediately corrected his title to Han Li. It seemed like he cared about it considerably.

"Then... Junior will obey!" Han Li hesitated, and agreed since it wasn't a big deal. He felt that the old man was strange.

"That's right, now let's talk about why you're here." The old man surnamed Xu continued in satisfaction.

"Junior wants to look for formulas related to medicine pills, read some books, and research the methods for refining pills." Han Li tried his best to speak subtly and indirectly. He didn't wish to draw people's attention.

"Books about refining pills and formulas? Just follow this stairs straight up!" What surprised Han Li was that the Elder didn't seem like he was going to ask at all. After he casually took out a black command medallion and casted a spell, a flight of stone stairs leading towards the ceiling appeared out of nowhere into the empty space next to the shelves, Han Li was overjoyed. He immediately hastened towards the stairs, but just as he was about to go up, this Elder Xu suddenly made a sly expression.

"Reading in the library on the second floor will cost you one low-grade spirit stone every two hours. You are not allowed to take the original from this place, and if you want to copy the contents, there will be a fee of ten spirit stones for each copied document."

Han Li haven't even stepped onto the foot of the stairs when Elder Xu,

who was behind him, spoke the rules in a tone that was neither too fast nor too slow. Han Li's steps stuttered, and he almost cursed out loud.

The fee was too expensive! Not to mention the copying fee of ten low-grade spirit stones, the reading fee for two hours a spirit stones alone would stop a lot of poor disciples.

A low level disciple could only earn about twenty to thirty spirit stones each year through their respective jobs! But after their cultivation and daily expenses, only a few spirit stones could be saved in reality.

Hence, this type of fee was definitely unethical! Han Li's impression of this Elder immediately made a 180 degree turn. What a profiteer!

Even though Han Li's face now shows an unusual expression, he didn't stop because of what the Elder said. Instead, he threw a low-grade spirit stone into the Elder's hands without looking back and headed to the second floor in a hurry.

"Interesting! I can't believe this kind of fee didn't scare him away. Looks like he is someone with some money. Hehe. Looks like I will be able to gain some wealth!" Seeing Han Li going up the stairs so forthright, this person who called himself Elder Xu couldn't help it but smile until his eyes resembled half moons. He rubbed the spirit stone on the corner of his clothes and examined it closely in front of his eyes. He exposed his stingy cheapskate side and was completely different than the approachable expression he had when Han Li first met him.

Han Li struggled to suppress how upset he was. After he calmed down, he carefully examined what was on the second floor.

The room was different than what was in his imagination: wide, bright, with countless books and bamboo slips filling the big room. Even though the room on the second floor wasn't small, the items that were there were so few that it was truly disheartening.

Two dusty bookshelves, a dirty table, and a broken chair; these was all the furniture in the room. Of course there was also twenty to thirty old, yellow books on the bookshelves, a few worn-out bamboo slips on the table, and two jade cylinders that had lost their original color.

“This shabby? Did I walk to a wrong place? What kind of a major cultivation sect’s secret library is this! This place looks like some poor student’s run-down study room.” Han Li was hit hard by what appeared before him in the room. If it weren’t because he was hesitant due to Elder Xu’s hidden power, he would have almost certainly rushed downstairs, grabbed his collar, and questioned him.

After taking a deep breath, Han Li calmly walked in front of a bookshelf, randomly picked out an old book, and read it carefully.

“Five phases of Heaven and Earth corresponds to the five viscera, the location where the acupuncture needle strikes can change one’s life essence...” He only read the first few lines of this book, immediately felt surprised, and closed the book to look at the cover.

“Hua Clan’s Secret Acupuncture Technique” These five words appeared in front of Han Li’s eyes.

Han Li’s facial expression immediately darkened, but not because the book wasn’t exceptional. The records in this book described the rare method of acupuncture, which could even cure patients who were on the edge of dying and stimulate the patient’s’ potential. But what did acupuncture techniques have to do with refining pills?!?! What was even more staggering was that he had already read this book countless of times back when he under Doctor Mo’s tutelage. He even memorized it by heart. This was suppose to be a medical book in the secular world. Why would it be here?

A series of questions popped into Han Li’s mind, and it made him lock his eyebrows in confusion. But when his eyes landed on the rest of the books on the bookshelves, he had an even more ominous feeling about it.

Han Li went through the rest of the old books In a hustle. After going through every single book, his face darkened a little more. And after he went through all the books on another bookshelf, Han Li’s expression was as dark as the sky before a storm was about to hit.

None of the twenty books were about refining pills. They were either methods used to save patients or home remedy for strange and

complicated diseases. The most absurd thing was that there was even a poison expert's narration about ways to use poison. They were all books used in the secular world.

"Two hours are up. Keep reading and there will be additional fee of spirit stones!" Suddenly, Elder Xu yelled from downstairs.

Hearing this, Han Li was speechless. These trashy books were worth spirit stones? But when he turned and looked at the items on the table, he felt doubtful, took out another spirit stone, and threw it down to the foot of the stairs.

"I received the spirit stones, Young Friend. Keep reading. This Elder will stop interrupting!" Elder Xu grinned and spoke from downstairs.

Han Li stopped paying attention to the Elder because he knew clearly that to the old man who didn't hide his desires, whether or not he paid his respects wasn't important. What was important was that Han Li kept giving him more spirit stones and letting him make a profit.

But Han Li didn't plan on wasting another spirit stone, so this time he moved faster when going through the bamboo slips on the table with a speed that was obviously faster than before. He only had to go through the contents briefly instead of reading them sentence by sentence.

Under the smooth, white light coming from a giant moon light stone on the roof, Han Li's mood went up and down while flipping through the bamboo slips. After he went through all of the bamboo slips, Han Li put the bamboo slips back to where they came from and sighed softly.

This time, these bamboo slips really did contain formulas and reports for a few medicine pills, but unfortunately, judging from the ingredients, these medicines all had effects similar to the "Yellow Dragon Pellet" and the "Gold Essence Pill." To Han Li, whose Eternal Spring Arts was currently at eleventh layer, they didn't have much effect on him anymore.

Therefore, Han Li's only hope was on those two jade cylinder that were the size of his fist. Hopefully, what they recorded would not let him return empty-handed.

Chapter 155: Depression

Han Li picked up the jade cylinder and blew it, exposing its true emerald-green glisten.

He pressed the cylinder against his forehead and slowly submerged his mind within it. An astonishing medicine pill refining formula appeared in his head. Unexpectedly, it was the Foundation Establishment Pill refining formula that Han Li had longingly yearned for. The process had quite a few steps: spanning from gathering raw materials to condensing the pill. This discovery gave him a delightful surprise!

For a while, he didn't go see the other jade cylinders. Then he hastily skimmed through its entirety. However, when his spirit read the words "Must be refined with Innate True Fire for success", Han Li stared blankly for a moment with a feeling of great foolishness.

Innate True Fire was a Daoist astral fire that only Foundation Establishment experts possessed. It was a basic magic that only one possessing the cultivation of Foundation Establishment could perform. Its power could be gradually strengthened when refining Qi during meditation to the point where, after one achieves Core Formation, the true fire could become a Samadhi fire from legend, capable of charring everything under the heavens.

However, how could Han Li, a Qi Condensation cultivator, possibly draw out this Innate True Fire? Only after he entered Foundation Establishment would he be able to ignite it.

However, if Foundation Establishment Pills were required to become Foundation Establishment, and refining them required Foundation Establishment's Innate True Fire, then they were truly interlocked in a vicious, unbreakable circle.

This made Han Li depressed to the point of wanting to knock his head against the wall!

To find a Foundation Establishment Expert to help him refine pills was completely unacceptable. This was equivalent to exposing the secret of

the small bottle to them. That assistant he asked for help would be likely to become his very own murderer.

Distraught, Han Li stood anxiously in front of the desk for a long while, before returning it to its original spot. Then he absent-mindedly picked up another jade cylinder and wiped it clean, exposing a fiery color.

“The matter of Foundation Establishment Pill can only be reconsidered in the future! Let’s first take a look at what’s inside here. Perhaps there is a wondrous medicine pill formula within!” Han Li was a bold and decisive person, having immediately put away the Foundation Establishment Pill cylinder to the side. He then turned to examine the red-colored jade cylinder, hoping for a pleasant surprise.

“Face Setting Pill.” Just as Han Li pushed his consciousness into the jade cylinder, those three words entered his mind, causing him to immediately feel a trace of disappointment. However, Han Li reassured himself for a moment. “Although this may be its name, this medicine pill effect might not necessarily be what I believe it to be. Perhaps it has some strange effect!”

However, the following words completely crushed Han Li’s extravagant hopes: It can cause one’s appearance to remain young forever. The descriptions of the pill’s effect was of no use to him.

Han Li stood there motionless and said nothing. His mind still continuously suppressed the scathing threads of an evil flame’s smoke as he inwardly cursed without restraint.

“What kind of trashy book collection is this? It doesn’t have any recipes that it should. It’s actually just a hideous mess of a collection! How could they wrongfully treat us cultivators to these acupuncture needle secret technique, these Face Setting Pills and such! They even arrogantly arranged all this here....”

When Han Li felt that this trip was nearly a complete waste, that loathsome voice spoke.

“Your time has ended. If you want to extend....”

“I am heading down!”

Han Li did not feel like wasting another spirit stone and prepared to leave, taking the jade cylinder containing the Foundation Establishment Pill refining formula with him.

However, just as he walked to the stairs, he hesitated. He felt that although the ‘Face Setting Pill’ was of no use in progressing one’s magic power, it could still be sold to other cultivators. Most importantly, this Face Setting Pill did not require the so-called Innate True Fire. It was something he could create right now.

With this thought, Han Li returned to the front of the table and took the red jade cylinder. He then quickly returned to the stairs and climbed down.

“How was it, Young Friend? Have you made any gains?” When the old man saw Han Li, he asked Han Li with a smile on his face. However, why did Han Li find those words so false?

“Elder Xu, is the floor above truly the sect’s medicine pill formula storage? How could there be so much rubbish and trash? Is there some other collection room?” Han Li didn’t care about mocking the old man and instead asked the question he had been holding back for quite a long time with a depressed face.

Seeing Han Li’s expression, he could not help but laugh with an evil smile.

“Ever since this old man began taking care of this place, Young Friend was not the first to ask this question. Almost every disciple who arrives at Yue Lu Hall for the first time and looks upstairs asks this old man that same question. However, if you want to know the entirety of this matter...” This Elder Xu deliberately dragged out his sentence, but the meaning of his words could not be more obvious.

He had a rigid expression that demanded payment, truly rendering Han Li speechless. This person before him, a Foundation Establishment Expert, was clearly a profiteer from the secular world with the appearance of stingy cheapskate.

Currently, Han Li finally realized why he did not want him to call him “Martial Senior” and instead address him as “Elder”. If he were to perform those actions as a Martial Sect Senior then, he would not be able to brazenly profit from these small tricks with his superiors pretending not to notice.

Han Li’s raised his eyebrows for a moment. Without saying anything further, Pa-pa, he placed the two jade cylinders in front of the old man’s table.

“This Junior originally thought to copy these jade cylinders. However, it seems that I currently do not have enough spirit stones! Since its like that, this Junior will only copy one. As for the other, this Junior will save it for the next trip.” Having lived in the secular world for so long, Han Li slightly struck back to avoid his appetite from growing larger.

“Young Friend wants to duplicate two of them?” The Elder Xu greatly smiled and widely opened his eyes.

“Originally, yes. However, this Junior wishes to learn the answer to the previous question, and he doesn’t have enough!”

“Hehe, Since Young Friend is this frank and straightforward, I will naturally answer that previous question free of charge. Let this old man first give copies to this Young Friend!” The old man hastily grabbed the two jade cylinders and took two white jade cylinders from the shelf behind him. He hastily duplicated them, fearful of Han Li going back on his word.

“The duplication is complete, take care of them well!” The old man’s movements were incomparably quick, leaving Han Li dumbstruck until he received the jade cylinder copies. After Han Li received the duplicates, the old man then looked at him with a ‘why are you still not quickly taking out the spirit stones?’ expression.

The corner of Han Li’s mouth twitched, then he opened his mouth to say something. However, he didn’t say anything. After a moment of silence, he neatly took out twenty low-grade spirit stones from his storage pouch and wordlessly handed them over to the old man.

The old man took the offered spirit stones with a happy grin, and for a short while, he was unable to conceal his happiness. Only after he counted the spirit stones three to four times did he notice Han Li waiting to his side for a reply.

At this moment, Elder Xu was perfectly content with the spirit stones he received and sized Han Li up with a gaze like Han Li was a rich man.

“You truly cannot judge a person by their appearance! Young Friend’s background was unexpectedly this profound and was truly to this old man’s surprise. Although this old man is greedy, he is a man who keeps his promises. Today, if Young Friend has a question, do not hesitate to ask. This old man will definitely satisfy and repay Young Friend!” After the old man returned his gaze toward him, he solemnly said this with an unexpectedly serious and proper image,

Han Li was slightly surprised, but without a trace of politeness, he requested the answer to the previous question.

“The answer is quite simple. The majority of medicine pill recipes were lost long ago. Not only for our Yellow Maple Valley Sect, but also the other sects...even the entire cultivation world is like this!” The old man leisurely answered.

When Han Li heard this, he was startled and looked at the old man with a puzzled gaze.

“Young Friend, calm down. It will be clear once you think about it. Why are medicine pill recipes valuable? Naturally it is because they are capable of using heavenly materials and earthly treasures to create medicine pills for us cultivators to consume.”

“However, Young Friend did not think about this before. In this world, heavenly materials and earthly treasures are quite limited. In addition, each plant requires hundreds if not thousands years to mature and be of use. During this time, the amount of cultivators do not decrease but instead increase year after year. As a result, the materials used in these pill recipes gradually grow sparse, eventually becoming completely extinguished. By the time the people of the cultivation world took noticed

of this grave problem, the heavenly materials and earthly treasures of this earth were long gone. Only a few particular regions still have a few of these ingredients remaining. These regions are incomparably dangerous even for us cultivators and are not easily braved.”

“Thus, we were thoroughly severed from a source of raw materials, and the medicine formulas became worthless. Who would attach value to them? After an extremely long period and several great calamities upon the cultivation world, these medicine pill recipes gradually disappeared from history. The few that remain could be counted upon one’s fingers, and the Foundation Establishment Pill was merely one of those that remained.”

Chapter 156: Earth Lung Fire

After Han Li heard the old man's reason, his face's expression did not change, appearing neither accepting nor denying those words. He nodded his head and said nothing. He picked up the jade cylinder duplicates, and turned around, walking toward the passage.

"Since Young Friend wants to refine pills, would you like to come again and buy a few pill furnaces? I will sell them a bit cheaper." The old man saw Han Li leaving and hastily offered to sell his own goods.

"I do not need them. For the time being, I cannot use them!" Han Li did not turn around and simply waved his hand goodbye.

"That is truly unfortunate. This pill furnace of mine can bear the high temperatures of earth fire!" Elder Xu regretfully said, having seen that his business was not successful.

"Earth fire?" Han Li stopped at the entrance of the passage.

"It is Earth Lung Fire, a bit more impressive than Innate True Fire." The old man indifferently mentioned.

"Isn't it said that pill refinery requires Innate True Fire? Can this Earth Fire replace it when refining pills?" Han Li tried his best to keep his voice calm. However, his heart was thumping greatly. He knew that he might've already found a solution out of his Foundation Establishment Pill refinery predicament.

"Hehe! It seems Young Friend is completely ignorant that Earth Fire has long replaced Innate True Fire in pill refinery! However, this is nothing serious. Basically, those who have learned a thing or two about pills should all know this. I will explain this to Young Friend free of charge!" The old man saw Han Li's interest, causing his spirit to stir. He even deliberately added the words 'free of charge' as an especially heavy bait.

How could Han Li not hear the meaning in the other party's words? He could not help but bitterly smile. The old man clearly implied that although he would tell him free of charge, he would only speak a

sentence for free. To say seven or eight sentences free of charge, the difference was far too great.

However, this matter was of great importance, and Han Li would not be able to tangle with him once more.

As a result, he directly walked back and instantly agreed, "So long as Elder Xu's words about Earth Fire are true, then I will select one of your pill furnaces!"

"Hehe! My pill furnaces are absolute top quality goods. They are certain to satisfy Young Friend!" Elder Xu saw that an agreement was smoothly met and could not help but smile with squinted eyes.

"At first, Innate True Fire was used to refine pills, but this was during an ancient time long ago! The current pill refinery of the cultivation world borrows the Earth Lung Fire from Profound Yang Earth to temper and refine medicine pills. Long ago, our ancestors already discovered that Earth Fire not only had purer essence and higher temperatures than True Fire, it was also longer lasting and more stable. Its success rate was usually much greater than when using True Fire to refine pills. Furthermore, it was also equivalently effective when used to refine tools. That is the reason why so long as cultivation sects and a few of the larger cultivation clans have the qualifications, they will all have their own Profound Yang Fire Earth to provide their younger generations with refined pills and refined tools. Only wild cultivators, those whose powers are truly alone and are unable to borrow Earth Fire, would use the more highly likely to fail True Fire method to refine pills." The old man shook his head as he narrated a large speech that passed through his mind.

"Then this sect also has Earth Fire that can be borrowed for use? Elder Xu should definitely know where." Han Li was elated, but he resisted the excitement in his mind and preserved his reason in order to ask about the crucial location.

"Hehe...."

When the old man heard Han Li's question, he couldn't help but laugh heartily. He smiled at Han Li and blinked his eyes, as if he were puzzled!

“When Young Friend had just entered Yue Lu Hall, didn’t he see a passageway without any signs? That passage leads to the Profound Yang Earth Fire. If you pay a few spirit stones, you will be able to borrow some Earth Fire for use!” After an easy smile, the old man eventually told Han Li the truth.

“Is this really true?” Han Li could not help but expose a happy expression, and the corner of his mouth slightly rose.

“This old man is already this old, how could he cheat a junior such as yourself?” Elder Xu replied, somewhat annoyed.

“It was this Junior’s slip of the mouth! Please forgive me, Elder Xu!” Although Han Li felt that the old man was greedy, he would not deceive a junior in this matter like that. He sincerely said this with a modest tone.

“Humph! Seeing that Young Friend’s age is so young, this old man will forgive you this once!” The old man’s expression eased. However, his face stiffened immediately after. “However, it would be favorable if you were to purchase a pill furnace. This old man might not offer them anymore.”

When Han Li heard this, Han Li could not help but bitterly smile. This Elder truly won’t neglect this advantageous moment of vulnerability!

“Are those the pill furnaces?” Han Li asked, pointing to the shelves behind the old man. They held cauldron furnaces of various sizes.

“Obviously not. Those are simply common trash. They are only capable refining some inferior medicine pills. How could they withstand the heat of Earth Fire? Genuine quality pill furnaces are all here!” The old man recovered the true qualities of an unscrupulous businessman and gleefully patted the unremarkable gray pouch at his waist.

The old man took off the gray pouch and lightly patted it as he looked to the ground beside him. Then an azure light swept out a row of interesting, antique-styled, unusual pill cauldrons on the floor.

“How about it? This is the old man’s collection of pill furnaces. Every single one is a work of quality, absolutely not some common trash!” The old man said somewhat complacently. He picked up the nearest cauldron

furnace and lightly struck it.

“They are truly quite good!” Once the cauldron furnaces appeared, Han Li sensed that they emitted traces of Spiritual Qi. He couldn’t help but let out a soft “Yi”.

However, this actually made him more interested in the old man’s unremarkable pouch. This was absolutely a high-grade storage pouch that exceeded the capabilities of his own storage pouch. Otherwise, it would be impossible to hold such a great volume of goods.

“Hehe! This old man wasn’t boasting. Xu Mou is truly an expert at refining cauldron magic tools. Most of the sect’s low level disciple’s cauldron furnaces come from this old man’s hand. These few are the finest of the finest!” The old man saw Han Li become somewhat moved and was unable to contain his joy.

Han Li faintly smiled and did not speak any words of retort. He calmly walked next to the cauldron furnaces and looked down, beginning to choose.

“This is a Rahu Cauldron. It is capable of absorbing a flame’s high temperature, generally increasing the success rate of medicine pills... It can also....”

Every time Han Li picked up a cauldron furnace to examine it, Elder Xu would stand to the side and jabber incessantly praises, wishing he could talk about each one of these rare and incomparable treasures all day long. If Han Li didn’t immediately buy one, it would be as if he would be wronging the Heavens! Han Li could not help but bitterly smile.

“It’s this one!” Han Li took every cauldron furnace and examined them all once through. After he muttered to himself for a moment, he pointed to the smallest silvery cauldron furnace.

“Clicks tongue! Young Friend truly has a good eye. This silver threaded cauldron is the best among the pill cauldrons, a rarely produced magic tool. Among all of my pill cauldrons, this treasure is the best among them!” When Elder Xu saw Han Li raise the smallest cauldron, he was somewhat astonished. However, he immediately resumed his normal

expression and rambled a mouthful of praises.

‘What does this have to do with a good eye? I have to think about the limited space in my storage pouch. It can only hold this cauldron!’ Han Li unhappily thought when he heard the old man’s noisy words.

Finally, after haggling over the price with the old man, Han Li settled on the price of thirty-two low-grade spirit stones and purchased the object. Then he departed without the slightest hesitation.

Although the time Han Li was in contact with Elder Xu was short, he had already spent over fifty spirit stones. Even though it could be said that he was considerably wealthy, it still greatly caused his heart to ache. As a result, he was truly unwilling to stay here any longer, even if the old man were to passionately urge him to stay.

After exiting Elder Xu’s room, Han Li returned to the hall with the transportation formation. However he didn’t immediately leave the palace hall, but after a moment of consideration, he instead walked through the passageway that wasn’t marked with a character.

At the end of the passageway appeared a huge stone door barring the way. A rainbow luster continuously circulated through the stone door. With just a look, one would know that it had an extremely impressive restrictive spell so that one wouldn’t dare to act without thinking.

To the side of the stone door, there was another small stone room. Within the room was an ugly man with lumps across his face. This ugly man was merely at the peak of Qi Condensation. However, he looked at Han Li with a proud and cold gaze, leaving Han Li in a bad mood!

But what kind of person was Han Li? Although there was hatred in his heart, his appearance was relaxed as he inquired three times, only to be met with an unwillingness to reply to any of his requests. However, this allowed Han Li to clearly understand the circumstances of this situation and what was going on!

Afterwards, Han Li didn’t pay attention to the other party’s rudeness. He courteously said goodbye and took his leave. But before he left the room, he heard the ugly man muttering.

“A destitute, low level wretch of a disciple also wishes to learn pill refining? Did you already refine your brains into mush? A guy with all talk and no action, vainly wasting so much of this uncle’s saliva!”

When Han Li heard the other party’s words, his figure didn’t change the slightest. However, he hid the coldness he felt toward the ugly man, a coldness capable of scraping frost. A flash of murderous desire flashed through his eyes.

Chapter 157: Murong Brothers

After Han Li left the Yue Lu Hall, he said goodbye to the two people in red and flew towards the Hundred Medicine Garden with his magic tool.

In the air, Han Li kept thinking about refining the Foundation Establishment Pill, while looking down at the continuous hills with indifference. Suddenly, a loud, rumbling burst came from beneath and surprised him. He couldn't help but take a closer look...

Only to see lightning flickering on one of the hills, and there were some faint applause coming from there. It brought up Han Li's curiosity; he landed from his magic tool nearby and automatically started to get close to the source.

"Murong Brothers, another one, show us what you've got!"

"That's right. This is the first time I saw the shape of lightning that closely, it's so frightening!"

...

As soon as he arrived at the top of the hill, Han Li heard a noise coming from the front, and the name 'Murong Brothers' moved his heart.

"The genius brothers with thunder spiritual roots who just entered the sect, isn't their last name 'Murong'? The loud burst from before...are these brothers, the focus of so much attention, demonstrating their skills?"

At this moment, he saw clearly that there were about thirty to forty disciples of varying ages on a hilltop, huddled in a loose circle and pointing to two eleven or twelve year-old youngsters in the middle of the circle while talking excitedly.

There were several charred pits within the circle. The edges of the pits were melted because of the high temperature, and they released light cyan-blue smoke. After a breeze blew by, the burnt smell was everywhere.

Seeing this scene, Han Li hastily went over and looked carefully at the youngsters. The two of them had delicate features, fair and tender skin, and they looked very similar. However, when they blinked their eyes, they

looked like little elves.

At this moment, because of the crowd's attention and praise, the two of them were blushing with excitement. After they looked at each other, they chanted a spell at the same time, and lightning flashed in the hands of the two, followed by two thin bolts of lightning flying out. They landed on the ground nearby with two loud bangs and a burst of bright, white light, creating two more pits in the ground.

"This is the thunder attribute's Thunder Palm? Regardless of its power or sound, this was more powerful than the Fireball Technique, Icicle Technique, or other magic techniques that are of the same level. Thunder attribute magic techniques are indeed the most destructive magic techniques!" Han Li was astonished and also envious of the brothers' spiritual roots attribute.

Obviously, Han Li wasn't the only one with this mentality. The other disciples who were watching them were also looking at the two with envious looks, while hating themselves for not being blessed by the Heavens with this kind of high-grade attribute that made everyone jealous!

The brothers demonstrated their thunder spell a few more times among the crowd of applause, but their strength were clearly starting to fall behind their will. After all, they were still too young.

"That's it? It seems the power of thunder spiritual roots is merely this. I say it's probably not even as good as my wind spiritual roots!" Just then, a lousy man's voice sounded from the crowd across where Han Li stood, and the surrounding people couldn't help but look in that direction.

A young man and woman were standing together side by side. The man was tall and handsome, and the woman was beautiful like a flower. They were obviously a pair of couple who were madly in love. That man looked proud, and seemed to be dismissive of the Murong Brothers' Thunder Palm, and the woman was blushing because so many people were looking at her. Her reddish face was even more charming.

"Who is this man? He's so wild!"

“Wind spiritual roots? Isn’t that also a type of mutated spiritual roots! This man has mutated spiritual roots?”

“I know this man. He is Senior Martial Brother Lu, and he indeed has mutated spiritual roots. His wind spells can be very powerful!”

“Even if he also has mutated spiritual roots, why is he saying things like this?”

“Maybe it’s out of jealousy! After all, back then among the low-level disciples, he was the only one who had mutated spiritual roots. But now, there are suddenly two more who are even more qualified than he is. Of course he would feel unbalanced!”

“What? So narrow-minded!”

“Hush! Be quiet, don’t let him hear this. He’s very vengeful. Being targeted by him would be very terrible!”

...

Because of the young man’s appearance, everyone around were whispering together. It appeared that this person wasn’t that popular around here.

“Hmph! Little fellow, I will show you what real mutated spiritual roots are!” The young man’s face sank when he saw people discussing him like this. He walked into the circle and declared proudly, “The two of you, feel free to attack me with your thunder spells. If I dodge for even a half step, I will kowtow and admit my wrongs to you two little demons!”

Seeing Senior Martial Brother Lu being so arrogant and looking down on them for no reason, the Murong Brothers were so mad that their faces became pale.

“You’re not gonna dodge?”

“Of course.”

“And no magic tools allowed?”

“Yes.”

The two brothers were indeed biological brothers. They each added a rule favoring them and finalized it. The young man was also arrogant, so he didn't even take the two brothers seriously and accepted their conditions without any objections.

"Good, then us two brothers will take care of Senior Martial Brother!" The two teenagers said angrily in unison.

"Senior Martial Brother Lu, will you be okay like this?" The young man's female companion started to worry.

"Hehe! What's there to worry about dealing with two kids? Martial Sister Cheng can rest assured!" The young man waved his hand indifferently and stood in front of the Murong Brothers in an ostentatious manner.

The two youngsters looked at each other, and suddenly came close together. They each held out their hand and took each other's hand, while the other finger pointed to the sky. Together, they chanted the same exact spell!

Seeing this, the young man sneered, and casted a defensive spell onto himself. A cyan-blue mask immediately surrounded him, and wrapped him tightly inside.

"Thunder Chain Strike."

The biological brothers finally finished casting their spell, and they pointed their finger at the top of the young man's head. A dark cloud the size of several zhang appeared above him. A white light flashed in the cloud, and a lightning bolt as wide as a finger landed on the cyan-blue shield. The lightning hit the shield so hard that the shield shook violently, and the young man's expression changed. Apparently the power of the lightning was out of his expectations.

But this lightning-shock was just the beginning. From the dark cloud that was floating in the air, more of the same lightning attack fell and hit the shield until it flickered and grew dark, on the edge of breaking apart.

The young man's expression darkened again, as he suddenly made some

complicated, dazzling finger gestures, growled deeply, and pressed his hands tightly against the light shield wall. The light mask suddenly glowed in blue. Not only was it repaired, but it also seemed to be even thicker than before.

But the Murong Brothers naturally wouldn't give up the advantages that they possessed, so they also sent a variety of spells up into the air and made the dark cloud expand until its diameter was several zhang. The falling lightning grew thicker and more frequent.

Faced with the two brothers' fierce attack, this Senior Martial Brother Lu was even more surprised and angry, and he didn't know what to do. He never expected them to grasp the elementary mid-grade Thunder Chain Technique at such a young age. He was hit so hard he couldn't withdraw from the fight, and he could only cast counterattack spells. He suffered at such a disadvantage in front of so many people.

Just like that, the youngsters on one side were using all their strengths to support the dark cloud's lightning attack, and on the other side, the young man was struggling to keep casting defensive spells to reinforce the cyan-blue shield. This competition turned into an unexpected tug of war.

Normally, if one side attacked and the other defended, the attacker would naturally have a greater advantage, and they could save a lot more magic than the defender. However, the Murong Brothers who were attacking had already used up a lot of magic power during the demonstrations just now, and they didn't have enough magic power from the beginning. Also, the young man surnamed Lu was a lot older after all, so the maturity of his magic power couldn't be compared to those that had just entered the sect like them. By fighting a battle of attrition, they had their backs against a wall.

Under everyone's sight, that dark cloud released the last few bolts of lightning and then dispersed, leaving a clear sky. Depleted of magic power, the youngsters were forced to first stop the lightning.

Chapter 158: Blue-clothed Woman

When the young man saw this scene, he coldly laughed.

“Since I’ve already received your attack, is it not my turn to attack?” When these words were spoken, he had already been protected by a barrier. He brought his hands together and suddenly drew a curved moon with his hands, causing a huge arc of azure light to appear from his hands.

“Taste my azure arc chop!” The young man said darkly. Then the disk of light shot out, whistling toward the two people across from him.

This person’s attack stirred up the crowd. Regardless of who was watching, the Murong Brothers fundamentally couldn’t resist this magic technique. They had no defense to speak of.

The youngsters were alarmed and were at a loss. After glancing in every direction, they dashed to the left and the right, running into the crowd.

“Open!” The young man suddenly shouted.

Following the shout, the flying azure arc unexpectedly split into two by the young man’s hand movements and immediately pursued the two youngsters.

It just so happened that one of the youngsters saw that among the crowd, Han Li had the deepest magic power. As a result, he headed straight towards him without the slightest hesitation, immediately frightening Han Li.

Han Li hadn’t the slightest intention of involving himself in this matter. He knew that even if the young man was unbridledly savage, he wouldn’t dare to brazenly injure the Murong Brothers. At most they would be frightened and teased for a time. Thus, he absolutely didn’t take the initiative to interfere.

Even more surprising was that youngster was exceptionally cunning. For example, he wanted to use Han Li as a shield! But how could Han Li possibly follow the other party as they wished? As a result, Han Li’s body

flashed, disappearing from his original location. Then the youngster pounced into the air, angrily cursing in tears. With no better option, he frantically tried to flee.

A rubbing sound came from the trembling ground, precisely from the direction in which the other youngster was running. Afterwards, dust blew in every direction, and the voice of a male cursing came from within. It was clear that someone was not as wise as Han Li and did not break away from his role as a living shield.

After the dust dissipated, he saw a long, thick wall of earth several zhang high marked with a half-moon groove several feet long. Behind the wall stood a coarse, short youth about twenty years old, carrying a strange wooden walking stick. With a wave of his hand, the wall created an opening. After that, he walked out with a cheerful Murong youngster close to him.

“You with the surname Lu, what is the meaning of this? Did you not see that others were here? And you still actually attacked! Did you want to chop at him along with me?” The coarse, short youth asked, both angry and startled.

Senior Martial Brother Lu snorted and didn’t pay notice of the coarse, short youth’s reproachful question. Instead, he somberly operated his remaining half azure arc blade and sped up its pursuit toward the youngster on Han Li’s side. Having seen the azure arc’s neutralization, he truly planned to not let the other youngster go.

“Stay your hand!” A young woman’s delicate, scolding voice came from the sky. Then a raging blaze dropped from the sky, completely engulfing the azure arc chasing the youngster. The raging flames turned into a ball and disappeared.

“Who? Who was it that broke my spell?” The young man surnamed Lu asked angrily, raising his head to the sky.

Above everyone was a blue-clothed woman who had arrived at an unknown time. She looked to be a fairy with a garish appearance and skin, as if she had been congealed from fat. This woman’s slim willow

waist, beautiful jade neck, blue royal clothing, and tall-styled hair cause people to look with a hesitant and venerable gaze.

“So it was Junior Martial Sister Nie! I was actually asking who has such magic power!” After seeing the blue-clothed woman, the young man surnamed Lu, who was originally in a rage, immediately changed his expression and warmly saluted her with elegant poise.

“Elder Martial Brother Lu, look at my face. Is this competition over?” The royally-dressed woman coldly asked while stepping on a magic tool.

“Hehe, since it is Junior Martial Sister Nie’s desire, then I will comply with the rules.” The young man replied with a smiling expression.

The royally-dressed woman nodded and did not speak any further. She dropped from the sky and walked over to the Murong Brothers.

“Elder Martial Sister Nie, your arrival was truly timely. Otherwise, we would have faced a disastrous end!” The youngster who had just escaped calamity immediately ran over to the blue-clothed woman as soon as he saw her, grinning ear from ear. The other brother also grinned and hurried over from the earth wall.

“Return. Face the wall and ponder about your misdeeds. You are not allowed outside until after you’ve trained to the ninth layer in your cultivation art.” The woman lightly said without a trace of anger. The slightest change in emotion could not be detected.

When the Murong Brothers heard this, they immediately became crestfallen. They both agreed and drooped their heads.

After the blue-clothed woman finished taking care of the two brothers, she turned her head toward the coarse, short youth and unexpectedly burst into a smile, overshadowing all nearby life in an instant. She opened her small almond lips and said, “Many thanks for Senior Martial Brother’s assistance. Else this Junior Martial Disciple Murong’s mishap would have brought shame to this little sister’s teacher!”

“It, it was nothing...”

When the coarse, short youth saw the other party’s gorgeous smile, he

was stunned, foolishly giggling and stuttering between his words.

When the males all around saw this preferential treatment, they could not help but be fiercely envious of this man's encounter with a beautiful woman. They all greatly regretted why they did not act a moment ago. As a result, they all gazed at the man with piercing gazes of envy.

When the young man surnamed Lu saw this, malice flashed through his eyes, but he quickly concealed it and maintained his cultured and refined appearance. Apart from the female companion besides him, only Han Li who was coldly looking on seemed to notice this peculiarity.

Although that Junior Martial Sister Chen was an exquisite and ravishing beauty, dainty as a flower, her looks were far inferior to the woman surnamed Nie. Thus, when Junior Martial Sister Chen saw the blue-clothed woman appear, she feared that Senior Martial Brother Lu would become infatuated with her and immediately ran to Senior Martial Brother Lu's side, grabbing the young man's arm. Afterwards she shot a hostile stare at the other party.

The blue-clothed woman naturally felt the other party's ill will, but she didn't mind in the least. Instead, when she was about to leave with the Murong Brothers, she faintly shot a glance at Han Li. Her beautiful voice immediately rang through his ear.

"Although the magic of your esteemed self is not weak, this kind of chivalric behavior is truly disagreeable to this young woman. I hope that the next time I see you, Junior Martial Disciple will somewhat change his ways."

(TL: 独善其身 "Chivalry" Lone Righteousness-to be righteous regardless of one's surroundings.)

After Han Li heard the blue-clothed woman's words, he slightly wrinkled his brow. It seemed that she had completely seen through his evasive action. It did not leave this woman with a favorable impression and even left a rather bad impression.

However, he wasn't a saint. To know fully well that someone was trying to exploit you and do not try avoid it, was that not idiocy? The coarse,

short youth actually didn't have chivalry. However, he was currently being stared at by the fellow surnamed Lu. Perhaps the fellow would kill him in the future. If that moment came, would that beautiful woman even avenge him? Han Li thought this with a scoff.

He did not know why but Han Li absolutely couldn't stand this peerlessly talented beauty. He found pretty daughters of humble families to be much more pleasing to the eye. Thus he didn't care even the slightest what this Senior Martial Sister Nie thought. He only hoped that she would not pay attention to him.

At this moment, there was no trace of the beautiful, blue-clothed woman and her company. After Senior Martial Brother Lu took a fierce glance at the coarse, short youth and departed from the mountaintop with his female companion, the remaining people had nothing left worth seeing and disorderly dispersed.

Han Li departed on the flying magic tool and returned to the Hundred Medicine Garden.

After he entered his room, Han Li impatiently took out the two jade cylinders and looked at the duplicate containing the method to refine the Foundation Establishment Pill. He began to carefully study it word by word.

Although Han Li's mind was lively, his expression didn't change in the slightest. Several hours later, Han Li let out a long breath and put the jade cylinder down. Closely afterwards, he sunk into deep thought and reflection.

After a long moment, he let out a deep breath and stood, tightly wrinkling his breath. He then walked into the medicine garden. He began to sweep his gaze over the plants within the garden, muttering to himself. "Thousand Knotted Flower, Black Peony Grass, Gold Essence Ginseng and the thirty-one other complementary drug ingredients are of no problem. They are all in the garden. Only a few need to aged considerably, requiring several hundred years of maturity. However, the most important medicines, Chalcedony Mushrooms, Violet Monkey

Flowers, and Sky Spirit Fruit, are quite troublesome! They are unexpectedly not here. Furthermore, I've never heard of them before."

Han Li hesitated for half a day before deciding to ask others. Naturally, couldn't he just ask the small old man, a medicine master?!

Chapter 159: Spiritual Medicines of Heaven and Earth

After Han Li finished planning, he put down the jade cylinder and picked up the other.

The “Face Setting Pill” was far simpler to refine when compared to the Foundation Establishment Pill. It didn’t require True Fire to refine, and there were no medicine ingredients he was unfamiliar with. All of the ingredients were quite common.

What made him speechless was that many of the drug ingredients actually required the maturity of a thousand years or higher before they could be used as material for a Face Setting Pill. It was not wonder why he never heard of this medicine pill before. After all, what cultivator with spiritual herbs over a thousand years old would waste such a precious treasure in the Face Setting Pill, which was completely useless to cultivators? This caused the Face Setting Pill to be known to a rare few in the cultivation world.

However, this wasn’t a problem to Han Li. He simply had to induce maturity for a slightly longer period of time. Thus, he decided to put off the matter of the Foundation Establishment Pill. Instead, he planned to refine the Face Setting Pill with the furnace and see whether its effects were truly as miraculous as the recipe said, capable of preserving one’s appearance the moment the pill was consumed.

Six or seven days later, when the old man came again to collect medicine ingredients, Han Li stood within the medicine garden and directly asked the old man about the three wondrous medicine ingredients without covering much up.

“Chalcedony Mushroom, Violet Monkey Flowers, and Sky Spirit Fruit?” The old man stroked his small mustache and squinted his eyes.

“Hehe! It seems Martial Nephew already obtained the recipe for the Foundation Establishment Pill, which is why he wants to ask about these

three medicine ingredients! However, Martial Nephew, could it be you truly wish to personally refine pills?” Martial Senior Ma slanted his mouth and looked at Han Li with a ‘You are truly overestimating your own ability’ gaze.

“Naturally not. However, this Junior is completely ignorant of these medicine ingredients. Where would Junior be able to look for those several hundred year-old auxiliary medicine ingredients? Within Elder’s garden, the oldest herb is the Flower Dragon Grass, over a hundred years old. Under these circumstances, how could Martial Nephew extravagantly think to refine these pills?” Han Li couldn’t tell the truth and coped with flattering words.

“Since you don’t plan on refining pills, why are you asking about those three wondrous ingredients? This old man is quite busy and doesn’t have the leisure to chat with you!” The small old man stiffened his face and stubbornly said.

Han Li had long expected this Martial Senior Ma eccentric temperament and didn’t panic in the slightest. Instead, he smiled and continued, “This Junior simply saw those three ingredients and noticed that their names were very peculiar. Furthermore, I’ve never heard anyone mention their appearance or medicinal properties. That is why I am very curious and asked without thinking it through. However, what your Martial Nephew doesn’t understand is why Martial Senior’s medicine garden doesn’t contain any of the three wondrous ingredients. With such rare ingredients, Martial Uncle should have thought up of every possible method of obtain seeds and cultivate them within the garden. Could it be these wondrous ingredients are extremely difficult to cultivate and that Martial Senior is unable to grow them?”

“Nonsense. Don’t tell me you doubt Martial Senior’s skills? The reason why none of these ingredients are in the garden has nothing to do with my skill. Rather, they are transformed by the Spiritual Qi of Heaven and Earth. They are breeds that grow on their own. As for where to find the seeds? Even if one were able to find a seedling, because the reason they grow in is far too peculiar, they are unable to survive in ordinary

environments, even if one were careful and diligent. Otherwise, why else would I let them slip by?" The small old man was not lightly provoked by Han Li's words and couldn't help but be annoyed.

"There are no seeds? How is that possible!" Han Li could not help but cry out.

"Humph! How is it not impossible? It should be known that these type of ingredients have nearly vanished from the outside world. However, if they are very useful to cultivators and were capable of being grown by humans, every great immortal sect would have already done so by now. Why else would they allow the amount of Foundation Establishment Pills being produced to decrease with each passing year?" The small old man rolled his eyes at Han Li, and replied bitterly.

His words gave Han Li an icy feeling at the bottom of his heart. The maturing effect of the green liquid was great. However, if there simply weren't any seeds at all, how could he induce maturation? How could he create something from nothing!

"If there is nothing else, then I will leave first! After two months, I will come back and take more medicine ingredients." This Martial Senior Ma didn't notice the changes in Han Li's face and instead turned around, preparing to depart.

"However, every ten years a batch of Foundation Establishment Pills are produced. Where do they come from? If what Martial Senior says is true and the ingredients grow in peculiar environments, then there must be a fixed location where they grow!" Han Li's mind went through a lightning-fast revolution and immediately thought of another method. It didn't matter if there were no seeds since there would at least be immature sprouts! He could find a few and induce maturation. As a result, he hastily asked this.

"It seems your curiosity is not small at all! However, I urge you to stifle the thought. If you go to that sinister region to find those three wondrous ingredients, it would be equivalent to suicide." The small old man lazily turned his head. After coldly uttering those words, he paid no more

attention and flew off.

Han Li was left stunned, standing in his original spot without moving for a long while.

“These three wondrous medicine ingredients, I must get ahold of them. Even if he won’t tell me, can I not ask others?” Han Li calmly said to himself. He looked at the sky and let out a deep breath.

During his two years in Yellow Maple Valley, apart from Martial Senior Ma, the other disciples he was familiar with were Honored Disciple Yu and Cultivation Guidance Disciple Wu Feng.

Honored Disciple Yu schemed deeply and was very snobbish. Han Li was not fond of dealing with this person. As a result, the first one he sought was actually that Senior Martial Brother Wu Feng. If he could not obtain any clues from him, then he could only make a trip to the greedy old man at Yue Lu Hall. In all likelihood, he would know. However, he would like to avoid being bankrupt!

When Han Li arrived at the low level disciple area of the Cultivation Guidance Pavilion, Wu Feng happened to be giving a few youngsters an explanation of low-grade magic techniques. When he saw Han Li, he simply gave a faint gesture before proceeding with his work.

Han Li did not mind. He knew Wu Feng simply had a strong sense of responsibility and didn’t mean anything rude.

With regards to Senior Martial Brother Wu, Han Li truly felt some admiration toward him. Even after this Cultivation Guidance Senior Martial Brother took the Foundation Establishment Pill and remained at the peak of Qi Condensation, his comprehension of low-grade magic techniques had truly reached perfection. He was able to deduce many things from one look, causing Han Li to exclaim in astonishment. Furthermore, the benefits he himself received were not shallow.

If it were just this, Han Li would have merely had a good impression of him and not at all be filled with this kind of deep respect. What astounded him was that when this Senior Martial Brother fulfilled his responsibility to guide cultivation, he treated all fellow apprentices who

asked for guidance in magic techniques equally favorably, without exception. He put his heart and soul into imparting his understandings and insights. He seemed to never conceal any selfishness. This truly amazed Han Li to a great degree.

In truth, Han Li initially did not trust the person to be of this character. However, he believed that the effort put in for a mere appearance was particularly excessive for a hypocrite he happened to meet. Thus, he treated him neither coldly nor warmly and showed respect at a distance.

But after truly being in contact with him over a year, each and every action he commonly treated people with truly confirmed to Han Li that he was no fraud. He genuinely and sincerely aided his fellow apprentices. This left Han Li at a loss for words for a long while.

Although he was unwilling to follow Senior Martial Brother Wu's ways, he naturally no longer had any suspicions against his character. Thus, he intended to become acquainted with him. Although they still hadn't reached the level of familiarity to the degree of best friends, their relationship was on far better terms than that of ordinary disciples.

Thus, he patiently waited to the side.

This Senior Martial Wu's explanation was truly attentive. The mid-grade elementary "Fire Serpent Technique" was actually explained no less than two full times. In addition, he demonstrated it several times, letting multiple people learn from experience.

Apart from the techniques Han Li originally learned, he truly didn't not learn any of the other Five Element magic techniques. In the period of these past two years, he merely pieced together the techniques he had yet to learn.

This caused Han Li to be completely disappointed in his aptitude, and greatly increased his desire for the Foundation Establishment Pill.

After the guidance had finished, the several youngsters departed and took their leave. Wu Feng then asked Han Li with a smile, "Junior Martial Brother Han, you haven't come here for quite a while! Have you decided to begin learning mid-grade magic techniques?"

When Han Li heard this, he bitterly smiled. Dispirited, he replied, "Senior Martial Brother should know about my aptitudes. I already wasted two years learning those lower elementary magic techniques. To learn even more difficult mid-grade magic techniques, would require at least seven to eight years to complete. The way I see it, it would be better to leave it be!"

When Wu Feng heard this, he wrinkled his brow. He said somewhat reproachfully, "How can Junior Martial Brother be so dejected! It should be known that even if your aptitudes are a bit inferior, diligence can fill the difference. There is still a great chance of success."

Chapter 160: Forbidden Trial by Blood and Fire

After Han Li heard his well-meaning advice, he could not help but casually agree. Afterwards, he asked about the Foundation Establishment Pill medicine ingredients.

“Junior Martial Brother Han wants to know the source of Chalcedony Mushrooms and other spiritual medicines?” Wu Feng asked, astonished.

“That’s right, Senior Martial Brother has already been at the sect for many years. He should know something about this!” Han Li asked expectantly.

After Wu Feng heard this, he murmured to himself for a moment and said, “Naturally, I know a bit. However, I urge Junior Martial Brother to bury this thought! Not only is the place incomparably dangerous but it is also fundamentally impossible to approach. Only during a specific time and place and with the assistance of the Sect Elders would you be able to enter.”

When Han Li initially heard that Wu Feng knew something, Han Li was delighted. But the following words alarmed him and caused him to question it closely.

So it turned out that these spiritual medicines had been scarce in the cultivation world for a long time. They simply disappeared from common regions. The sole places where they could currently be found were those so-called forbidden areas.

Since they were capable of being called forbidden areas by cultivators, these regions must naturally be extremely dangerous. They were generally vile environments located in desolate places. Some were demon lairs and could only be reached by a journey of slaughter. There were also locations with a few ancient restrictive spells that required a great deal of effort to break through them.

For Yellow Maple Valley and the other cultivation sects, all of their

Foundation Establishment Pill medicine ingredients previously came from one forbidden area. That location was continuously sealed by an ancient wind attribute restriction.

The restrictive spell was quite impressive. Originally, no matter how much strength the cultivator sects used, they had no hope of opening it. However, though it was unknown how, someone had actually later discovered that this restrictive spell had a five-day period of weakness every five years. During this time, if several Core Formation experts simultaneously used force against the restriction, they could create a temporary opening and let a certain amount of people inside.

However, once the opening appeared and the cultivators tried to go in, something unexpected occurred.

Those of Foundation Establishment and greater were all hindered by another eccentric restriction. But those of Qi Condensation were not obstructed in the least and were able to collect and bring back a great amount of rare spiritual medicines.

This discovery caused a great commotion in the cultivation world of the State of Yue. As a result, the Seven Great Cultivator Sects would dispatch disciples below Foundation Establishment into the forbidden area to gather a great amount of spiritual medicines. Naturally, the Foundation Establishment Pill medicine ingredients were of the highest priority.

At the start, the disciples of cultivation sects could harvest without assault. After the first harvest, the chosen disciples all said that this was a very comfortable task. However, with each passing harvest, the spiritual medicine within the forbidden area gradually grew more sparse, causing each sect to dispute over the wondrous medicines. Greater actions began to continuously occur until several hundred years ago, when a disciple lost his life in the struggle.

The first loss of life caused each of the large sects to completely tear off their faces and bluntly fight; the weak were prey to the strong. The Heavens and Earth favored none, and the sects encouraged their disciples to pillage from others, causing the forbidden area to be thoroughly

stained with the color of blood.

Like that, the spiritual medicines gradually decreased, and the fights within the forbidden area grew increasingly fierce and bloody.

In the last hundred years, due to the great brutality of close combat, less than one third of the disciples who entered the forbidden area were able to come back alive. Each of the sects' loss of junior elite disciples was not small! This caused each of the sects' disciples to call the forbidden area the "Forbidden Trial by Blood and Fire". One by one they began to avoid going. One time, there was even an awkward scene where not a single person wished to enter.

As for forcing people, that was naturally out of the question.

If the disciples didn't sincerely enter the forbidden area to search for medicines, then they were certain to work halfheartedly. A majority of them would hide and wait until it was safe before leaving.

This hadn't previously happened before, causing the upper echelon to seethe with anger. However, they had no alternative. After all, these people were originally unwilling to go. Being forced to brave those strange dangers, how could they possibly be criticized for not being willing!

As a result, each of the sects in the State of Yue steadily watched the spiritual medicines with increasing interest. However, the amount of disciples willing to accept the risks were very few; thus causing the sects to start using heavier rewards to recruit disciples to enter the forbidden area. Those who brought back spiritual medicines from the forbidden area would be given even greater rewards, attracting much attention.

The other sects did not say this, only Yellow Maple Valley did!

Several times after the tradition began, the sect directly stipulated in writing that so long as a disciple registered to participate, they would be bestowed a mid-grade spirit stone and spiritual tool beforehand to serve as encouragement.

As for those who were truly capable of bringing spiritual medicines

from the forbidden area, the sect would further reward them according to the quality and quantity of the medicines. From spirit stones and spiritual pills to magic tools, all that one could think of was possible, even secretive rewards as great as a Foundation Establishment Pill. This was sufficient for low level disciples to stake it all.

These great rewards naturally caused the cultivation sect to experience a great surge of registrations for a time. This surge was maintained for the next two to three times and then completely declined.

The bloody reality caused the many disciples to wake to the realization that these great rewards did not come without cost!

Because of the initial excitement over the great rewards, the original survival rate of those who fought in the forbidden area actually lowered from less than one third to less than one fourth after the introduction of greater rewards. Of those who survived, those capable of bringing out spiritual medicines were even fewer, and the majority of them were gravely injured. They fundamentally didn't reap any rewards, not to speak of even receiving a Foundation Establishment Pill.

This was what Han Li was told after asking Wu Feng about the source of the spiritual medicines.

After hearing everything he had to say, Han Li felt nothing except depression!

He didn't expect that gathering some medicine ingredients would require going to some forbidden area and, moreover, engaging in close combat with the disciples of other sects. Only by being the final victor would one be able to leave. Furthermore, the rate of survival was astonishing. Less than one fourth of the disciples were able to leave this so-called, "Forbidden Trial by Blood and Fire".

The hazards one would have to brave were far too great! Han Li wasn't some expert. Among the low level disciples of Yellow Maple Valley, he was merely of medium strength.

As a result, without profound magic power and no powerful magic techniques, he could only rely on their several magic tools and his mind's

quick wit.

Relying on just this, how could Han Li believe himself to be one of the four that survive?

This caused Han Li to become angry, and he could not help but ask Wu Feng, “Why doesn’t each Immortal sect restrict their disciples and collaboratively divide the spiritual medicines? It should be known these medicines will inevitably be refined into Foundation Establishment Pills. Isn’t there no need to quarrel and tear into one another, thereby planting the seeds of hatred and revenge?”

After Wu Feng heard this, he immediately replied with a bitter laugh, “Junior Martial Brother does not understand. Although they will all be used to refine Foundation Establishment Pills, the distribution of the number of medicine pills would completely depend on the spiritual medicines available. Under these circumstances, how could they not do their utmost to fight for the spiritual medicines?”

After Han Li heard this, he remained silent for a long while.

Finally, with a belly full of worry, he asked about the next “Forbidden Trial by Blood and Fire” and found out that it was in half a year. After several warnings from Senior Martial Brother Wu, Han Li left the Cultivation Guidance Pavilion and returned to Hundred Medicine Garden.

Over the course of the next few days, Han Li dispiritedly thought of this matter, repeatedly pondering about the stakes and risks involved. He attempted to compel himself to pick the more sensible option.

It was clear that in the State of Yue, apart from this forbidden area, these three spiritual medicines would not be found. Otherwise, the Seven Great Immortal Sects need not shed blood every five years and cripple themselves.

If Han Li did not want to brave these strange dangers, he could only hope to find the spiritual medicines in regions outside the State of Yue. Else, he would be completely without hope of achieving Foundation Establishment and become a pile of bones within a hundred years. However, after a careful thought, he knew that leaving the country to look

for spiritual medicines was even more hopeless.

However, if he truly participated in the “Forbidden Trial by Blood and Fire”, the three-fourth death rate was far too large! At that point, his possibility of death was immense! This truly caused Han Li to feel bewildered!

Chapter 161: Market City

After several restless nights of troubled sleep, Han Li carefully mulled over his thoughts of self-preservation and the thought of forever losing the opportunity for his Immortal path and his willingness to face unknown danger to reach Foundation Establishment. He gradually became inclined to the latter. After all, he had not resigned to have such an ordinary life!

However, his cautious nature caused him to rush a trip to Yue Lu Hall. After he confirmed the bitter reality of the Trial by Blood and Fire and the lack of heavenly spiritual medicines outside of the area with the greedy old man, he thoroughly abandoned his wishful thinking.

Since he clearly understood that he had no path of retreat, Han Li was fiercely determined to give his all in the Forbidden Trial by Blood and Fire. He would either find the spiritual medicines within that would allow him to reach Foundation Establishment or fall to his death in the struggle within the forbidden area.

With the determination to either live or die, Han Li began his preparations to travel to the forbidden area in half a year. Within this short time, he had to further his strength in order to improve his chances to survive.

It was impossible for him to reach the eleventh layer of the Eternal Spring Arts without the assistance of medicine pills. If he wanted to increase his strength, he could only learn a few new magic techniques and purchase a few powerful talismans and magic tools.

New magic techniques were not much of a problem. In all likelihood, if he were to mention it to Senior Martial Brother Wu, he wouldn't refuse to teach him. However, with his aptitude, he would only be able to either learn two elementary low-grade magic techniques or a mid-grade magic technique in half a year. As for elementary high-grade magic techniques, it would be better not to think of them. Thus the quickest way to increase his strength would be by using talismans and magic tools.

Regarding magic tools, Han Li currently had a few. As for magic tools that could be used in combat, apart from the ring and the small black flag that Martial Uncle Ye gave him, he also had the long saber capable of turning into a rope and the gourd that could release automatically-attacking spheres that he got from the two yellow-clothed men who tried to kill and rob him.

As for when he entered the sect, he received a Fierce Sun Sword and Cold Moon Saber. They were simply the lowest level of magic tools, capable of attacking with a bit of flames and cold Qi. They were fundamentally unimpressive.

As for talismans, Han Li was originally extremely lacking in them. Fortunately, from the goods that the shady Martial Uncle Ye didn't embezzle from him, he had quite a few talismans. He was truly given over ten elementary mid-grade talismans and two rarely-seen high-grade talismans, greatly increasing his confidence.

Furthermore, Han Li still had the small sword talisman that he still didn't know what to do with. In fear, the yellow-clothed man he beheaded called this a talisman treasure. It should have a grand origin. It would simply be seen as stolen property, so he didn't dare to let others know of this talisman. He kept the two words "Treasure Talisman" in his head a secret and intended to find an opportunity to ask others about it.

Naturally, when facing the extremely terrible "Forbidden Trial by Blood and Fire", having only these objects was certainly not enough. As a result, Han Li planned to leave the sect mountains and make a trip to a nearby sect's market city to buy a few top quality magic tools and talismans.

However, he didn't have the backing of many spirit stones. This purchasing trip was certain to not go as one would wish.

Although Han Li had quite a few spirit stones he could use, in his future trip to the forbidden area, these spirit stones were important support in a prolonged fight, causing him to be quite reluctant about parting with them.

A few thoughts later, Han Li decided to cultivate a few precious

thousand-year medicinal herbs in the little time he had to exchange for spirit stones or to simply barter.

Actually, creating a few Face Setting Pills would probably be better, perhaps slightly increasing the value of the thousand-year medicinal herbs. However, Face Setting Pills truly required too many medicinal ingredients. There was not enough time to actually collect all the materials. As a result, he could only directly use drug ingredients to exchange.

But in order to not arouse suspicion from the sect, Han Li inwardly decided that he would only sell the cultivated medicine ingredients to cultivators outside the sect. Were he to directly use medicinal ingredients to do business in the sect, he was certain to arouse the attention of others.

As a result, with a plan in mind, Han Li began to work.

He first visited Wu Feng and picked the most practical elementary magic technique, “Qi Restraining Technique”. It was an auxiliary-type elementary mid-grade magic spell that could resist the Heaven’s Eye Technique. As long as this technique was used beforehand, one would not appear to the naked eye and one’s Qi would be completely restrained. Its purpose was to conceal one’s self.

Naturally, this magic technique was of no use against experts at Foundation Establishment or above. It was, however, completely effective against the high-layer cultivators of Qi Condensation. This technique was far more practical compared to the “Body Concealment Technique”.

However, the reason why Han Li didn’t pick any attack or defense-type magic techniques was completely due to his own true combat experience.

Because of the time when he fought other cultivators in close combat, he discovered that in a fight between cultivators, there were far too few opportunities to completely execute the incantations of mid-grade magic techniques. There were far more opportunities to use magic tools and the low-grade magic techniques with the shortest execution time. Talisman methods were the next quickest in defending and attacking. That was why

in a battle, it was more practical to use talismans rather than mid-grade magic techniques or higher. Naturally, if one had a companion that fought for time to cast a magic technique, that was a different argument.

When Han Li obtained the cultivation incantation of this technique, he detailedly asked Wu Feng the specifics of cultivating this technique and then began to practice it with his heart and soul. However, as a mid-grade magic technique, this Restraining Qi Technique was completely different compared to the auxiliary magic techniques he previously learned, such as the “Imperial Flight Technique” and the “Body Concealment Technique”. Its cultivation was extremely difficult. It seemed that completely mastering it within half a year was truly no small challenge.

Like that, Han Li bitterly cultivated the “Qi Restraining Technique” during the day, and gathered green liquid and concentrated on cultivating several often-used spiritual grasses during the night. In addition, in order to prevent Martial Senior Ma from discovering these medicinal herbs, he specially staggered the cultivation of the medicines between the periods he arrived to pick up the medicine ingredients. He also planted the medicine in the most remote corners of the garden. After all, the scent of herbs a thousand years old or more stood out quite a bit.

However, it was fortunate that this Senior Martial Senior had always come to collect right on schedule. He was neither early or late, and would hurriedly arrive and hurriedly leave. He seemed to be completely busy, though Han Li didn’t know what he was busy with.

Han Li had no interest in what the old man was doing. He would say it was for the best that Martial Senior Ma was continuously busy. With no chance of interference by snooping, Han Li was allowed to cultivate medicine at a larger scale.

By the time Han Li initially grasped the “Qi Restraining Technique”, four months had already passed.

He also eventually cultivated two thousand-year old spiritual medicines. It was believed that medicinal ingredients of a hundred or more years were difficult to find in the current cultivation world. They were certain to

produce a small and pleasant surprise in the market city.

Han Li received a command medallion allowing him to exit the sect mountains from his acquaintance, the Hundred Opportunities Hall's Honored Disciple Yu.

Actually, the disciples of Yellow Maple Valley had the chance to leave once a year. However, as cultivators wouldn't want to squander this period of time by going out, the disciples who took the opportunity were very few in number.

After Han Li flew out of the sect mountains' large restrictive formation, he flew to the northeast, straight toward the market city.

With this said, Yellow Maple Valley's market city had quite the reputation. It was more prosperous than any other sect's market cities.

Because the Tai Yue Mountain Range that spanned over the Jian Province was close to the northern State of Yuan Wu and there was a non-hostile relationship between the cultivation world of the State of Yuan Wu and the cultivation world of the State of Yue, cultivators from the State of Yuan Wu would come to Yellow Maple Valley's market city to do business and bring many unusual goods not present in the State of Yue. It could not be said that it was not an unexpected and nice surprise, attracting quite a few rogue cultivators and cultivation clans to the city.

This market city was established in the northeast of the Tai Yue Mountain Range. That was why Han Li arrived there after flying for more than half a day.

When he grew near, Han Li didn't immediately rush over. Instead, he changed his gray cloth jacket and all the garments on his body that would identify him as a Yellow Maple Valley disciple. After he was done, he appeared as if he were a common cultivator. Then he walked over to the market city.

According to the code of conduct of the cultivation world, cultivators were not allowed to fly within five li of the market city, which was why Han Li encountered many hurried travelers traveling on foot throughout his journey. Among these travelers, there were many who dressed very

peculiarly, causing Han Li to suspect that they were cultivators from the State of Yuan Wu. It seemed that this market city was quite popular.

While Han Li was blindly pondering, he had already arrived at the entrance to the market city.

Chapter 162: Ten Thousand Treasures Store

Yellow Maple Valley's market city looked like Han Li's hometown, Green Ox City. The entire market was only one street that pointed north and south. In the south, there were dozens of houses of various sizes. Some were tall, some were short. Some were buildings, while others were just huts. It was very inconsistent and uneven.

These were all industries of the Yellow Maple Valley, but only less than half were personally managed by Yellow Maple Valley's disciples. The other large half was leased to the cultivator families and rogue cultivators who usually dealt business here. Most of these businesses were stores that traded raw materials, talismans, and magic tools. There was also a five elements bookstore that specialized in selling elementary spells, and there were two restaurants and inns that were convenient for people to get food and rest.

Aside from the lower level disciples at the market city, there were also a number of Foundation Establishment experts who stayed there regularly, keeping order in the city and preventing people from causing trouble.

A large portion of the northern part of the street was empty. It was reserved for cultivators who wanted to set up a shop on the spur of the moment. As long as they paid the Yellow Maple Valley disciples with a low-grade spirit stone, foreigners could set up a shop for a whole day on the side of the empty street without any interference. They would even have the protection of the disciples during the time that they had set up a shop, enabling them to have no fear of any enemies who would want to take revenge.

With these measures encouraging foreign cultivators to come here and do business, along with the special geographical location of the market city, the Yellow Maple Valley's market city had been prosperous for many years. There would even be rare items that would appear from time to time in the market city, attracting even more cultivators.

However, because Han Li wanted to avoid arousing suspicion, he didn't enter the market city from the convenient south street entrance. Instead, he circled around and entered from the north. Before setting foot into the street entrance, he covered his face with a blue cloak in case there was anyone here who could recognize him.

It was already the afternoon. The street of the market city didn't seem to have many people at a first glance. However, this was normal. After all, this market city was not some secular world downtown market that would be noisy all day long. The people who were qualified to come here were unique cultivators; you would only find one cultivator in ten thousand people! It was already pretty good to have this many people.

Han Li mocked himself a little after realizing this fact and walked towards the small shops on the side of the street. He decided to see if there was anything worthwhile in the small shops before going to the large stores.

After going through all the small shops, Han Li's heart sank. The magic tools and talismans at these small shops were completely useless to him, with the exception of three or four items that could barely be considered passable. Buying them would only be a foolish expense, so he stopped wasting his time. He turned around and sprinted towards the large stores.

"Seven Opportunities Pavilion."

"Wind Guiding Study."

"Heavenly Crafts Store."

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This time, Han Li didn't recklessly find a random store to walk into. He took his time and slowly strolled along the street. After he familiarized himself with the name, size, and type of each store, he picked the one that looked the largest and frequently had cultivators streaming in and out: Ten Thousand Treasures Store. He went inside.

(TL: 万宝 Wanbao means 'ten thousand treasures.')

From simply hearing the store's name, one could tell that the owner of the store was confident of his goods, so Han Li hoped to find some rare treasures here and not leave empty-handed.

Han Li slightly hesitated as soon as he entered.

The bright hall was large enough to accommodate dozens of people without feeling crowded. There was an extraordinarily long front desk, built with precious Red Aleurite wood, and seven or eight servants in blue uniforms. All of this gave off an impressive atmosphere of grandeur.

In the hall, two of the servants in blue were explaining something to a few people who looked like customers.

Inside the counter, there was a large variety of items. From the style of the items, it seemed like they were things that only cultivators would use. From the lowest grade raw materials to the commonly used talismans and magic tools, the Ten Thousand Store had everything.

Han Li smiled. It seemed like he had really found the right place.

At this moment, a servant in blue came over and said with a big smile, "Esteemed customer, what are you looking for? Do you want me to help introduce you to something? This store's goods will definitely satisfy all of our customers' needs!"

"I want to look at magic tools and talismans, but I only want the best. Do not show me inferior goods!" Han Li spoke softly through his cloak.

The servant in blue was slightly stunned by this remark, but then he carefully looked and judged Han Li's manners. After making sure he wasn't joking, the smile on his face grew even wider. He knew he must be a big customer, so he quickly invited Han Li in and personally led him to the VIP room on the second floor.

The furnishings upstairs were different from the decor downstairs. Not only was the scale of the second floor a lot smaller, but there were some antique furniture on the second floor. It was decorated in an elegant, comfortable, and cozy manner. The most surprising thing was that there was a precious incense burner and a bundle of burning incense in the

corner of the room that filled the room with a faint smell of sandalwood.

A gentle-looking, middle-aged man holding an old book was standing in the room, reading its contents aloud. He seemed to not have any magic power like a completely ordinary man.

Han Li was somewhat stunned. This place did not look like a place to do business. Instead, it looked like some rich person's home. The person who was reading saw Han Li come in and calmly closed the book. The servant in blue who had escorted Han Li quickly walked up to the man and whispered a few words.

After the middle-aged man finished listening, he cupped his hands and said with a smile,

"I am Ten Thousand Treasures Store's shopkeeper, Tian Buli. How should I address you?"

"Li Feiyu," Han Li unceremoniously borrowed his good friend's name.

"Oh it's Brother Li. Brother, please sit down!"

The middle-aged man led Han Li to sit down, then ordered the servant, "Go brew a pot of our best Jade Cloud Tea!"

After Han Li sat down, the middle-aged man started asking politely. "This is the first time Brother Li came to this store, right?"

"Hehe! Shopkeeper Tian is really observant. This is indeed the first time I have visited this store." Han Li deliberately changed his voice and made himself sound like a tough man with a deep voice.

"It doesn't matter if it's your first time visiting this place. As long as you are willing to come here, it shows your favour to our Ten Thousand Treasures Store. This store will definitely satisfy Brother!" Shopkeeper Tian confidently said.

"I wouldn't want to go through the trouble of going to multiple stores if I could just find all the items I need at one store! I hope this store's goods are really exceptional," said Han Li in a dubious tone.

"Hehe! Brother Li can rest assured about that. Our store's credibility is

definitely one of the best on this street. If this store can't satisfy Brother, then there's no need to bother checking out the other stores!" said the shopkeeper unhurriedly, exuding confidence.

At this moment, a serving maid came upstairs with a teapot and several teacups. The refreshing smell of tea filled the room before she had even approached the two of them.

Shopkeeper Tian waited for the serving maid to set up the tea set and took a sip first. While smiling, he said, "This is a special tea made here in the store. It's rare in other places. Not only does it smell refreshing, but drinking it can make people energized. Brother Li can give it a taste."

Han Li looked at the fragrant tea in front of him. He shook his head lightly and said in a slightly impatient tone,

"Shopkeeper Tian, we can drink tea later. First, let's get down to business!"

"I never thought Brother would have such an impatient personality! Very well! Please wait a moment, I will be right back!" Shopkeeper Tian stood up with a slightly disappointed expression. He cupped his hands towards Han Li and went downstairs, leaving Han Li alone.

After approximately the time to brew a cup of tea had passed, Shopkeeper Tian once again appeared before Han Li. However, this time he was carrying a few brocade boxes that were in different sizes.

Shopkeeper Tian patted the brocade boxes and spoke with a grin. "I heard that Brother Li wants the best magic tools and talismans from the servant downstairs, so I went downstairs to the collection room and brought up a few pieces of treasure that I have collected for a long time for Brother to see. I hope Brother Li is happy with them!"

Han Li's eyes widened when he heard this. He was very curious about the content in the brocade boxes. He wondered what rare items they would have to be in order for them to be called treasures by the shopkeeper, and whether or not the content would be above his expectations.

Shopkeeper Tian had already placed the brocade boxes on the table and opened each of them for him to see. However, Han Li noticed that as soon as the brocade boxes were opened, two magic pressures that were definitely stronger than him came out of nowhere and tightly locked onto his every move.

Han Li was surprised at first, but quickly understood that this was a security measure that the Ten Thousand Treasures Store had employed to secure the treasures in case he were to suddenly steal the items inside the brocade boxes. He then relaxed and had a deeper understanding of the Ten Thousand Treasures Store's ability.

Chapter 163: Brocade Treasure Box

At this moment, Shopkeeper Tian started to present the item in the small brocade box.

“A set of Gold Beetle Swarm Blades, with one mother blade and eight children blades. It was created from fine iron and gold. Refined by a Foundation Establishment expert for three days and three nights. So long as one holds the mother blade, one can simultaneously control the eight children blades to attack the enemy, causing the enemy to be unable to defend against these incomparably sharp blades.” He introduced the set of peculiar light gold blades while pointing to its case.

Han Li did not speak and carefully examined the handle for a moment. He nodded his head and put it down.

“Flying Dark-Iron Shield, a very scarcely seen defensive magic tool. It was refined from a large chunk of Cold Yin Earth. Not only is it incomparable solid and indestructible, it’s also embedded with a spell. It can revolve in any direction and automatically defend,” said Shopkeeper Tian while picking up a tiny shield the size of a palm. Then he passed it over to Han Li to let him carefully look over it.

Han Li took the shield into his hand and lightly stroked its decorative design. After he muttered to himself for a moment, he asked, “Can I try out the spell for a moment?”

“Of course you can. Brother Li, please do not hesitate to use it!” Shopkeeper Tian said in a relaxed manner.

Since he said as such, Han Li was not polite and slowly poured magic power into the shield in his hand.

As a result, the metal shield shined a black light. In a blink of an eye, it enlarged several times over, and it even flew out of his hand and floated in the air. Furthermore, it slowly began to circle around him. Its size seemed just enough to cover a few vital points on the body.

Han Li was pleased. After attentively controlling it for a moment, he

could control its movement as he pleased, much to his expectation; it was quite nifty and agile.

After trying it out, Han Li was very pleased with that magic tool. What he was currently most lacking was this kind of life-saving magic tool. With this shield, his odds of surviving the Forbidden Trial of Blood and Fire was surely to increase quite a bit.

However, Han Li hadn't immediately express anything. He simply returned the iron shield to the box without speaking. Then he waited for the other party to continue their presentations.

Shopkeeper Tian was not at all discontented with Han Li's method of handling things and continued to enthusiastically recommend the next article, a blue ball the size of a pill.

"Heaven's Lightning Child. Several hundred years ago, after a mysterious expert accidentally severed heavenly lightning, he successively condensed it. Each grain possesses great power. It is said that even if a Foundation Establishment expert resisted this lightning head-on, he was certain to turn to ash and smoke. There were originally seventy-three grains. However, after the passage of time, there are not many left. This one grain cost this store a great amount to take possession of it."

After Shopkeeper Tian said this, he could not help expose a somewhat complacent expression. This lightning bead was clearly a precious rarity.

When Han Li heard this, he was emotionally moved. It could actually kill a Foundation Establishment expert! Something of such great might couldn't be found by chance! If he could acquire it, then it would be equivalent to a trump card for his trip to the forbidden area. However, he feared the price would be high enough to scare people away! Why else would they not have sold it until now?

After Shopkeeper Tian presented the blue lightning bead, he spoke no further. Instead he looked at Han Li with great anticipation. Then he lifted the cup of fragrant tea and took an unhurried taste. Although the table had a tightly-closed brocade box that had yet to be introduced, he

hadn't spoken even a single word about it.

Han Li faintly smiled, fully aware of this Shopkeeper Tian's intention. He knew this was the time that he should show the other party his own strength. Otherwise he wouldn't be able to easily see the treasure in the final brocade box.

Before he came, apart from the two-thousand year-old spiritual herbs, he also brought along all of his spirit stones, comprising of two mid-grade spirit stones and nearly a hundred low-grade spirit stones.

However, Han Li was not likely to lightly make use of these spirit stones. He was only relying on those two spiritual herbs.

Frankly, although Han Li knew that spiritual herbs of over a thousand years of age were extremely rare in the cultivation world and that their value should be high, he didn't know the concrete cost in spiritual stones for these magic tools. He did not have a true estimate.

However, he understood that by using the herbs to obtain that small shield and the Gold Beetle Swarm Knives, he should have some extra spirit stones left over. As for that Heaven's Lightning Child that he further wanted to acquire, he was not very hopeful.

He didn't suddenly take out both of his spiritual herbs. Instead, he took out a small wooden box with something seemingly precious and exceptional inside.

The reason why Han Li acted as such was because he was fully aware that "A man wants to be adorned with clothes, but a Buddha wants to be adorned with gold". He knew that if this presentation went well, the value of his medicine herbs should somewhat increase, thereby making the chances that he would suffer losses unlikely.

Han Li did not open the lid of the small box but rather passed the case to the man in front of him.

Shopkeeper Tian had secretly paid close attention to Han Li's actions all along. When he saw this scene, he did not speak any objections and accepted the box. After a moment of careful observation, he carefully

opened the lid.

“Yi!”

Once he clearly saw what was within the box, Shopkeeper Tian was somewhat amazed. However, his expression grew displeased soon after.

“Brother Li plans to use this Yellow Essence Mushroom to exchange for this store’s treasures? How is this rare? Unless it is a great item of two to three hundred years or more, it fundamentally isn’t worth anything,” Shopkeeper Tian coldly uttered.

Han Li coldly chuckled several times and didn’t say anything else. He was studying the other party’s recent appearance at his own pace while tasting the fragrant tea that had been poured for him a moment ago.

Having seen Han Li’s fearless actions, Shopkeeper Tian was somewhat doubtful. He mustered all of his spirit and lowered his head, carefully examining the spiritual herb in the box once more.

“Xi!”

Shopkeeper Tian took a good look at it and suddenly breathed in a cold breath of air. Immediately, he stood from his chair in excitement and moved the box to a more adequately-lit portion of the room. He excessively examined it and then muttered to himself, “Impossible. Could it truly be over a thousand years old? Or is it simply resembling it?”

Han Li clearly saw the other party’s expression and heard his words, causing his heart to finally grow calm. He was now certain that the value of his thousand year-old spiritual herbs was greater than his previous estimates, not lower. In addition, it seemed that he had a good chance of acquiring that lightning bead.

After a moment of examination, Shopkeeper Tian suddenly became aware of his lack of manners and the fact that he revealed information to the other party about the true situation.

However, he was unable to change anything now. The object before his eyes was completely embedded in his state of mind. So long as this object were truly that thousand year-old item of the highest quality, he would

overpay to have this thousand year-old spiritual herb remain in the Ten Thousand Treasures Store. Doing so would give his Ten Thousand Treasures Store countless benefits.

However, he was currently embarrassed as he had never seen a thousand year-old spiritual herb before. He only knew of its reputation, and hence, he was truly unable to give a certain estimation of the maturity of that herb inside the box. He only knew that if the Yellow Essence Mushroom before him didn't have a medicinal potency of a thousand years or more, it should absolutely be of seven to eight hundred years or more. It would still be a very precious object; he was certain of least that much.

"Come!"

After a long moment of inspection, Shopkeeper Tian called a young servant from downstairs.

"Go and invite Elder Ding to come. Tell him there is a valuable object here that I need him to appraise," he solemnly ordered.

Afterwards, Shopkeeper Tian took advantage of this chance to have a completely honest chat. However, they completely avoided talking about the medicine herb, as if the medicine herb in the small box had been forgotten for the moment.

Not long after, a grey-haired old man escorted by a young servant slowly climbed up the stairs.

When Shopkeeper Tian saw this, he immediately went to respectfully greet him and offered his seat to this elder before standing to the side. It seemed this Elder Ding was truly a person of reputation.

However, Han Li had already guessed that this person was like Shopkeeper Tian, a common old man. He didn't have the slightest trace of cultivation.

"Shopkeeper Tian, you called this soon-to-be buried old man here. Could it be that there's something you couldn't call someone else for?" Trembling, the old man asked after gasping several times.

Chapter 164: The Secret of the Treasure Talisman

“Elder Ding, may I trouble you to look at this item? Even though Junior feels like it could be a thousand year-old spiritual medicine, I am not completely sure. I hope Elder Ding can identify the age of this herb.” Shopkeeper Tian requested in a humble tone and handed over the wooden box.

“Thousand year-old spiritual herb?” Elder Ding found it hard to believe it when he heard it, but he still took the brocade box.

“Elder, please take a close look! Is it really a thousand year-old Yellow Essence Mushroom?” Shopkeeper Tian suppressed the excitement in his heart and asked rapidly.

The Elder didn’t respond. He narrowed his eyes, focusing on looking at the shape, color, even the pattern. He even put the box under his nose and sniffed it slightly several times.

Han Li had hand-raised this medical herb with an accelerated process, so he knew very well whether or not this spiritual medicine was a thousand years old. Knowing this, he sat on the side with a leisurely expression and acted as if he didn’t see what the Elder was doing. What he was considering was only how he should bargain with the Ten Thousand Treasures Store.

Shopkeeper Tian was the exact opposite of Han Li, and he watched the Elder’s each and every single move without blinking. The unfearing manner he carried himself with when he first met Han Li was already completely gone. At this moment, his face was filled with a complicated expression, a mixture of expectations and worry, due to the possible outcomes..

Finally, Elder Ding placed the box gently on the table, closed his eyes and went into deep thought as he pinched his beard. He then opened his eyes, and said calmly with a very positive tone,

“Congratulations, Shopkeeper. This is indeed a Yellow Essence Mushroom that is over a thousand years old. It has also just been unearthed not long ago, and the efficacy of this medicine has not detracted at all, so it is a top-quality thousand year-old herb. This Elder can guarantee this!”

Hearing this, Shopkeeper Tian’s face showed a joyous expression. He then respectfully escorted the Elder down the stairs. Overjoyed, he picked up the box holding the spiritual herb and looked at it several more times.

“Shopkeeper Tian, shouldn’t you and I start talking about the deal?!” Seeing that the other party seemed to have forgotten that the owner of the spiritual herb was still sitting on the side, Han Li couldn’t help but remind the Shopkeeper of his presence.

“Oh... Ah!... I am so silly. Brother Li, please forgive me!” Slightly surprised, Shopkeeper Tian then remembered that this spiritual herb didn’t yet belong to the Ten Thousand Treasures Store. He slightly blushed, his face turning red.

“Hehe, that’s fine! But how do you plan on trading? Seeing how Shopkeeper Tian was fond of this item, I’m sure you won’t disappoint me!” Han Li chuckled and remarked as he slightly mocked the other party.

At this moment, Shopkeeper Tian’s expression returned to normal. He then put the item that was in his hands back on the table and said, “Since Brother Li can take out a thousand year-old spiritual herb, you must not be an ordinary cultivator. Hence, I will be straightforward to Brother without any of my usual business schemes. I will give you a fair price!”

With that said, after a moment of thought, he continued with a sincere tone, “Brother Li can trade this spiritual herb for any of the two items from the brocade box that I have previously showed you, or you can trade it for only the item in the last brocade box. If none of the items satisfy you, then this store can also pay you with enough spiritual stones to buy the spiritual herb. Brother Li, what are your thoughts?”

Han Li felt the sincerity in the other party’s words. After pondering it

over and over again in his heart, he felt that the price was reasonable, and since it was not beyond his bottom line, he was on the verge of accepting the deal. But before that, he still wanted to see the item in the last brocade box.

But it turned out that Han Li didn't even have to ask. Shopkeeper Tian had already opened the last brocade box and pushed it in front of Han Li, as he said with a smile, "The item inside this box is this store's most precious treasure. However, whether you like it or not will depend on if Brother has good taste!"

Hearing this, Han Li's curiosity increased. He looked inside the box, and immediately he was stunned. Inside the brocade box, there was a single, lone talisman inscribed with the image of a golden brick. The image shimmered with a golden light and looked realistic.

After taking a good look at the item, Han Li's thoughts couldn't stop spinning. He immediately thought of his talisman, the one with a small gray sword drawn on it. Could it be the same thing?

"Treasure talisman?" Han Li took a deep breath and asked in an uncertain tone.

The shopkeeper showed an expression of astonishment. He exclaimed in surprise,

"I did not expect that Brother Li would actually recognize this item! Usually, very few cultivators know about this treasure. Brother is truly knowledgeable, I am impressed!"

After Han Li listened to what he said, he laughed bitterly and shook his head. With a sigh, he replied,

"You look too highly upon this man surnamed Li. I merely heard about the treasure talisman; I don't know much about it. Since Shopkeeper Tian was able to take this item out, you must know a bit about this treasure talisman. I hope you will teach me about it!"

Han Li's remarks were all spoken from the bottom of his heart. He wanted to take the opportunity to gain a thorough understanding of the

treasure talisman and avoid being confused about it further down the road.

Shopkeeper Tian was surprised as he looked at Han Li. He felt like this wasn't something that needed to be kept as a secret, it's just that not a lot of people knew about it. Even so, it wasn't worth the effort to offend the big customer in front of him, so he agreed very easily and explained everything he knew about the "treasure talisman".

The "treasure talisman" was an item with great background, a special item that could only be made by cultivators above Core Formation.

The high-level cultivators who refined magic treasures would insert some of the magic treasure's power into special talisman paper so that other cultivators could temporarily use the power of the magic treasure from this special talisman. It had the characteristics of both a talisman and a magic treasure. Cultivators who were aware of their existence jokingly called them "fake magic treasures", but even so, they still deeply coveted them.

This type of "fake magic treasure" was very special. Even though it must be made by cultivators above Core Formation, any cultivator could use it, regardless of skill level. Even Monk Golden Light, the cultivator whom Han Li had killed, could use it well despite having cultivated only three or four layers.

However, cultivators below Foundation Establishment couldn't use condensation techniques, so they could only use ten to twenty percent of the treasure talisman's power. Compared to top magic tools, this didn't seem to be much higher.

After Foundation Establishment, however, cultivators would be able to use Mind Condensation Arts and make full use of the treasure talisman's might. Even though its power didn't resemble the earth-shattering, sea-roaring, mountain-shattering might of a true magic treasure, it was enough to disdain any other magic tool. Hence, cultivators after Foundation Establishment all wished to have a "treasure talisman". This would give them an advantage in battles and let them disregard other

cultivators.

Even though a “treasure talisman’s” powers were astonishing, it would keep on consuming the magic treasure’s power that was held within. If the powers were exhausted, then the treasure talisman would be completely useless. Therefore, the question of the treasure talisman’s usage was something that could not be taken lightly.

Furthermore, the creation of the “treasure talisman” was not a simple matter.

Because magic treasures were objects that could inherently be refined only by Core Formation cultivators, they were incredibly rare. They also needed to be refined day and night within a cultivator’s true essence to increase its power and could not lightly be shown to others. As a result, the same could be said as to which magic treasure the “treasure talisman” was created from.

Creating a “treasure talisman” was equivalent to harming the magic treasure since it siphoned off a portion of its power, and the owner of the magic treasure must refine the magic treasure for a long time to recover its might. Such actions were typically self-harming. Therefore, under normal circumstances, no cultivator who was above Core Formation would do such foolish actions.

But as the old saying went, the affairs of the world were in constant flux. The seemingly foolish action of refining a “treasure talisman” would be done continuously by most of the high-level cultivators when their times were almost up. It was for the sake of the younger generations and juniors, a small fortune in power and assistance.

As for the magic treasures left behind by predecessors, after a long amount of time of being refined and inherited by successors, the magic treasure would no longer be completely compatible with the new owner’s mind. In addition, half of the magic treasure’s original power would be lost, so it required the user to also achieve Core Formation or else the magic treasure would only be wasted and rendered unusable. Therefore, compared to keeping the magic treasures, refining “treasure talismans”

for the younger generation was more suitable.

But there were a lot of limitations to refining a “treasure talisman”.

Firstly, each “treasure talisman” could seal the power of a magic treasure, but only one tenth of the magic treasure’s power, and it could only reduce, not increase. Hence, even if multiple “treasure talismans” sealed the same magic treasure, their strengths were uneven and could vary.

Secondly, not only would refining treasure talismans reduce the power of the magic treasure, it would make the owner lose a lot of strength, so continuous refinement of “treasure talismans” was an impossible scenario. Every time a treasure talisman was refined, the magic treasure owner would have to recover for three to five years to regain his strength. And this was in the case that one would not waste true essence and would no longer intend to refine magic treasures ever again, or else the time would be even longer.

Hence, in the cultivating world, there often appeared scenario like these.

When high-level cultivators approach the end of their life, they would prepare to die while sitting proudly and without regrets. They would leave their most valuable items, usually a piece of magic treasure that had its power decreased greatly and several “treasure talisman” that sealed the same power. This must be said to be a helpless matter!

Chapter 165: Night Encounter

After hearing Shopkeeper Tian's explanation, Han Li had a better understanding about the treasure talisman. He couldn't help but look at the treasure talisman inside the brocade box once more.

"This store bough the golden light brick treasure talisman from a small family for a substantial price. It's a brand new treasure talisman, more than enough to exchange for Brother Li's thousand year-old spiritual herb!" Shopkeeper Tian promptly said in a tone that suggested he was in an unfavorable position.

Han Li sneered to himself. He did not believe the act the other party was putting on. At most, they were just fulfilling each other's needs. In Shopkeeper Tian's eyes, Han Li's spiritual herb was certainly higher in value than this piece of treasure talisman.

"What do you think? Which item will Brother Li exchange for?" Shopkeeper Tian finally asked with a smile.

Hearing this, Han Li hesitated for a moment and couldn't make up his mind. He originally wanted to check out a few more stores and see if there were any better magic tools, but the items in front of him were pretty decent and satisfied him. He was reluctant to give up any of the items, especially that golden light brick treasure talisman. That would be of help to him in the future, so he absolutely had to get his hands on that item.

"These few items, I like them all. I am planning to have all of them!" After considering for a while, Han Li made a decision.

He felt like it might not be a bad thing if he just bought everything at the Ten Thousand Treasures Store. At least it would reduce the attention he would receive and limit the impact to only the Ten Thousand Treasures Store.

"All of them? Brother Li must be joking!" After Shopkeeper Tian heard what Han Li said, his face darkened. He thought Han Li was being greedy and unrealistically trying to exchange all of the treasures from the

brocade boxes with one spiritual herb.

Seeing this, Han Li smiled. He didn't offer an explanation, but rather took out an identical box from his storage pouch and put it on the table.

"I will use two thousand year-old spiritual herbs to exchange for all of the treasures in your brocade boxes!" Han Li unhurriedly said with control of the matter.

Shopkeeper Tian was surprised and overjoyed. He couldn't bother to respond to Han Li's conditions and hastily checked the newly appeared spiritual medicine. When he made sure the new spiritual herb was indeed the same thousand year-old spiritual medicine as the first, he then looked at Han Li once again with a strange gaze. After all, a person who could bring out two rare spiritual medicines was worth his Ten Thousand Treasures Store's attention.

Han Li was wearing a cloak, so Shopkeeper Tian wasn't able to clearly see the other party's expression. Because of this, the other party felt even more mysterious. Therefore, after a slight hesitation, he said decisively, "Very well. Since Brother Li says so, I will take a step back and agree to your conditions. But this person surnamed Tian has a small attached request. In the future, if Brother Li ever has any more items like the spiritual medicine, I hope Brother will prioritize this store. This person surnamed Tian will definitely offer a price that will satisfy you."

Han Li gave a few dry laughs and nodded lightly without giving an actual response, but in his heart he was already sighing, knowing that the other party still became suspicious. It looked like he should limit these types of deals where he exchanged spiritual herbs for treasure as much as possible in the future, else he might attract a fatal disaster.

Shopkeeper Tian didn't know Han Li's real thoughts, but seeing that Han Li nodded and agreed, he was overjoyed. If the person in front of him who was surnamed Li could really give him thousand year-old spiritual medicine, the price of taking a step back today would have been completely worth it!

And so, Shopkeeper Tian and Han Li exchanged, and after putting away

each of their items, both of them were happy.

Han Li left the Ten Thousand Treasures Store just like that. He didn't even dare to stay at the market city for even a second longer. He quickly walked past the market city's flying limit, and he immediately flew away from this place.

Because he was afraid that the Ten Thousand Treasures Store would send some experts to secretly track him, he didn't blatantly fly directly towards Yellow Maple Valley. Instead, he flew straight away from the Tai Yue Mountain Range. After travelling for three or four entire days, he was then at ease, turned around, and flew back towards the Yellow Maple Valley.

During an evening three days later, Han Li entered the outer ring of the Tai Yue Mountain Range. Because the sky was about to darken, for the sake of his safety, he found a hidden cave to spend the night in and decided to head back to Yellow Maple Valley the following day.

This cave happened to be located halfway up a certain hill. There was even a messy pile of rocks blocking the entrance of the cave. From the outside, it was hard to discover the cave. Han Li just happened to be able to stay inside.

After eating something, he changed his clothing, leaned against the stone wall, and started meditating. It unknowingly passed to the second half of the night while Han Li seemed to be asleep, when he suddenly heard the sound of rustling clothes and moving wind. Bang. it seemed like someone outside the cave had landed on the ground on both feet. Han Li was startled and suddenly awoke.

"Could it be people from the Ten Thousand Treasures Store coming after me?" Han Li couldn't help but think of the worst possible scenario.

"Junior Martial Sister, this is a good, remote location. I think this place is it!" A familiar male voice sounded outside the cave.

Han Li was a bit shocked, but he was finally relieved. If it wasn't the Ten Thousand Treasures Store coming after him for the treasure, then the other party was just passing through. There was nothing for him to worry

about.

“Junior Martial Sister, there’s no need to look at me like that. Since you have never enjoyed the feeling of a s*xual relationship between a man and a woman, this Senior Martial Brother will love you dearly so that Junior Martial Sister will not waste her life as a woman. Your beauty will vanish at any moment, which would be a waste of your fair skin.” The man’s voice was neither fast nor slow. It was extremely tender, but the contents of his words were truly obscene and ruthless.

Han Li breathed in a cold breath of air. Who was the person outside? How could he use this kind of tone and say these ‘r*pe first then kill’ words? It was really impressive! Outside, there was only the sound of the man, but not the sound of the woman. This meant that this “Junior Martial Sister” had already been suppressed. She probably wasn’t able to open her mouth right now.

But the man’s voice was so familiar. He should be someone whom Han Li had seen before. Thinking of this, Han Li’s curiosity increased, and he couldn’t help but quietly move towards the entrance of the cave.

Rip! The sound of the woman’s clothing cut through the air, along with the man’s indecent laugh.

“Here, first take a Joyful Meeting Pill! Otherwise it won’t be pleasurable!”

“Cough, Junior Martial Sister! Why do you look at Senior Brother like that? Actually, didn’t you really want to pair cultivate with me after reaching Foundation Establishment?! This could be considered me fulfilling your wish! Haha...” The man seemed to be carried away as he laughed hysterically.

At this moment, Han Li carefully moved to the entrance of the cave and started peaking outside.

A man in white was squatting by a young woman and recklessly caressing her delicate body, pulling down her clothing from time to time.

The woman’s hair was a mess, so Han Li wasn’t able to see her face

clearly. But her body was already like a tender-white sheep, half-naked, revealing her white, bouncy skin, especially her half-hidden and half-revealed bosom. Her breasts were capable of elevating people's blood pressure and deeply evoking a man's natural instincts.

"So it was him!"

After clearly seeing the man's face, Han Li was somewhat surprised but also suddenly realized.

The man was the narrow-minded "Martial Brother Lu" who fought against the Murong brothers. He was a malicious, two-faced person. All Han Li wondered was exactly which poor Martial Sister had become the tiny white sheep underneath his claws!

Han Li didn't know if it was because this "Martial Brother Lu" had heard what Han Li was thinking, but he unintentionally moved aside the messy hair in front of the woman's face. It revealed a beautiful yet extremely vicious face.

"How could it be her?" After Han Li saw the woman's face clearly, he almost bit his tongue.

Wasn't this the "Junior Martial Sister Chen" who had shown affection for "Martial Brother Lu" from the very beginning?! She was already in a relationship with that "Martial Brother Lu", so why would this "Martial Brother Lu" go out of his mind and play the act of raping and killing his own partner? But as Han Li examined "Junior Martial Sister Chen's" glaring, fire-shooting eyes, it didn't seem like the normal teasing between couples!

Han Li blinked his eyes and was feeling a bit confused.

"Found it."

Suddenly, "Martial Brother Lu" stopped pawing the woman and yelled in glee. A tiny, delicate storage pouch appeared in one of his hands.

"Martial Brother Lu" stopped paying attention to "Junior Martial Sister Chen". Instead, he poured the storage pouch, and out came a large pile of items, such as magic tools, talismans, and private items like the woman's

clothing and underwear.

“Martial Brother Lu” ignored everything else, and instead went through the items among the jars, bottles, and boxes, as if he were searching for something.

Chapter 166: Savage

“Haha! I found it! I knew that Junior Martial Sister was certain to carry it with her, and sure enough, I was right!” Senior Martial Brother Lu was wild with joy, finding a small red wooden box after rummaging through her things.

He had already opened the lid, but because of Han Li’s angle, Han Li could not clearly see what was within the box. His curiosity was extremely great, but he didn’t dare to act blindly.

It should be known that since this person was so savage as to be able to act against his own female companion, if he were to discover this Junior Martial Brother, he was certain to kill Han Li in order to silence him. He would not be left alone.

In addition, he previously witnessed the power of the other party’s wind attribute magic techniques. Regardless of whether it was used to attack or defend, they were incomparably sharp. How could someone compete against this all-purpose magic? Even more was that the other party’s magic power was far deeper than his own, at the center of the twelfth layer. Just like that, regardless of magic power or magic techniques, he was at an absolute disadvantage. It appeared that he had no chances of success.

But Han Li knew that if he truly fought with his all, he would be able to contend against him. After all, with his original magic tools and the magic tools he had just acquired, he couldn’t possibly be a pushover. If that moment came, it would be uncertain who would kill whom.

Regardless, Han Li had no intention of using his life to play hero and save the beauty. After all, he had no relations to that Junior Martial Sister Chen. It was she who had eyes but did not notice that she took an ingrate for a lover, thereby delivering herself to him. Who was to blame? Why would Han Li want to put his life on the line for no reason or cause? He certainly did have such great resolve.

As a result, he intended to quietly watch this show until the end.

Afterwards when that “Senior Martial Brother Lu” walked away, he would have nothing to do with him. Naturally, Han Li would be certain to later pay more attention to this “Senior Martial Brother Lu”. After all, this was the first time he had seen a person capable of becoming this cruel and savage. Seeing him this ruthless, Han Li could only concede defeat.

With this thought, Han Li stealthily used the Qi Restraining Technique he had recently learned. He feared that the other party would accidentally react to his existence and cause him to have no option but to fiercely fight to the end.

At this moment, “Senior Martial Brother Lu” placed the small wooden box into his own storage pouch. Then he depravedly laughed several times and moved closer to “Junior Martial Sister Chen” at his side.

He excitedly proceeded to tear away the maiden’s clothing while speaking his thoughts to himself, causing Han Li, hidden to the side, to tremble with disgust upon hearing him.

“Junior Martial Sister, you mustn’t blame me! There is nothing Brother can do about this. You should know that crafty and unruly girl, Dong, kindly said that so long as I thoroughly sever my relationship with you and reach Foundation Establishment, she will pair cultivate with me. She can request that Great Aunt Ancestor of hers in the sect, Martial Aunt Ancestor Hong Fu, to personally accept me into the sect, imparting great world-shaking godly knowledge. This is a golden opportunity bestowed by the Heavens. This Senior Martial Brother doesn’t wish to miss this and therefore has no better option but to wrong Junior Martial Sister.”

The “Junior Martial Sister Chen” lied down on the floor with flames in her eyes. After she heard him empty his heart out, she shook like a leaf from anger, wishing she could immediately get up and ruthlessly bite way several mouthfuls from him to appease the resentment in her heart.

Unfortunately, this unfaithful lover had earlier used the “Wind Binding Technique” to restrict her entire body. She was fundamentally incapable of moving even the slightest, unable to even open her mouth to rain curses. She could only move at his will.

After she heard her former lover's words, her limbs became colder, and her face grew pale.

"Sigh! If Junior Martial Sister weren't the Chen Clan Leader's only daughter, I might've let Junior Martial Sister go. But I am truly afraid of Junior Martial Sister's love changing into hate, possibly drawing support from the Chen Clan's power to retaliate against Elder Brother. They would also spread this matter to all places, causing Elder Brother's reputation to fall. In addition, I have also heard people say that Martial Aunt Ancestor Hong Fu loathes fickle and unrighteous men the most. That is why for Senior Martial Brother's wonderful opportunity and reputation, Junior Martial Sister must disappear from this world! Surely no one would suspect me; after all, we were previously such a loving couple!" Senior Martial Brother said this hypocritically. Still, his hands didn't stop in the slightest. "Junior Martial Sister Chen's" clothing was entirely torn apart in the blink of an eye, leaving her completely bare.

Having seen the beautiful scene before his eyes, Elder Martial Brother Lu's eyes became even more lustful. His fingers slowly began to slide across her smooth skin, wanting to carefully sample her appearance. He continued saying, "However, what tempted me the most was that Junior Martial Sister, just like me, had actually yet to consume her Foundation Establishment Pill. She probably also wished to wait until after a great success in her foundation cultivation technique to take the pill! After all, if it is taken like that, the odds of achieving Foundation Establishment are slightly increased." As he spouted this out, he clicked his tongue.

"Regardless, since Junior Martial Sister wishes to hand it over to Elder Brother along with her untouched and innocent body, it can be seen that she does not hate to part with this Foundation Establishment Pill. I am also somewhat worried that taking one Foundation Establishment Pill truly is not enough. I fear that I may fail at becoming Foundation Establishment. After all, even if I have mutated spiritual roots, there is still a chance I may fail at achieving Foundation Establishment. However, now that I have Junior Martial Sister's pill, achieving Foundation Establishment isn't a problem at all."

With this said, “Senior Martial Brother Lu” withdrew his hands and took out the wooden box he just put away and a azure porcelain bottle. He looked to his left and right hands with a complacent appearance.

Having stealthily heard everything while concealed behind a stone, Han Li mind was in thought.

All of a sudden, two Foundation Establishment Pills had appeared before his eyes; this was far too great a lure.

After all, did he not plan to participate in the Trial of Blood and Fire for Foundation Establishment Pills? If he wasn’t required to brave that strange danger to obtain Foundation Establishment Pills, he would naturally be eager to give it a try.

With this thought, Han Li attentively observed “Senior Martial Brother Lu’s” every movement. If the other party exposed an opening, he would not hesitate to immediately act and kill this person, seizing the two Foundation Establishment Pills.

Presently, that “Junior Martial Sister Chen” appeared peculiarly ill. Her bitterly resentful expression had gradually faded away, replaced by an intoxicated expression. Her bare skin appeared pink, and her sweet lips trembled without letting out a sound.

“Hehe! It seems the Joyful Meeting Pill’s effects have appeared. Currently, Junior Martial Sister is surely feeling extremely unwell. To repay Junior Martial Sister’s great kindness, Elder Brother can only thank you for a moment and let Junior Martial Sister experience the feeling of wanting to live and die. This can be regarded as paying back Junior Martial Sister’s affections in the past.”

Without the slightest shame, “Senior Martial Brother Lu” thought this out loud and put away the objects in his hand. He began to move his hands toward his belt, seemingly intending to undress so that he may fornicate her as he pleased.

With this seen, Han Li’s heart beated. If he could take advantage of “Senior Martial Brother Lu” after he stripped naked and attack him then, the other party would surely be confused, enabling him to finish it in one

fell swoop.

Han Li thought more and more, feeling that his certainty of success was great. Then he paid greater attention to Senior Martial Brother Lu and subconsciously looked several times at his face.

“Something’s wrong.”

After Han Li looked several times more, he immediately discovered the problem.

Although this Senior Martial Brother Lu was flusteredly removing his belt, the time he took was rather far too long. Until now, his belt was still properly connected and hadn’t loosened one bit. What was even more strange was that Senior Martial Brother Lu’s face wore a hurried expression, but his eyes were calm and sober, without the slightest disarray. There was even the intention of a sneer concealed within.

Thump. Han Li’s heart beated. This was far too abnormal. His heart grew vigilant, and he hastily widened his spiritual sense. He then took out a “Water Barrier Talisman” and slapped it onto his palm.

Just as he finished this, Han Li suddenly felt something flying towards him from his left without a sound. Had he not previously opened his spiritual sense, he may have simply been unable to perceive it. This caused him to be frightened and furious.

Han Li didn’t think any further and hastily slapped the talisman onto his body. A deep blue barrier immediately wrapped around him. At the same time, an azure rope flew toward him and wound around him. The blue light interrupted it just in time.

“Yi!”

“Humph!”

“Senior Martial Brother Lu” and Han Li let out a sound at the same time. However, Senior Martial Brother Lu was somewhat surprised that his sneak attack had failed while Han Li was startled and furious from nearly falling into his sinister, cunning trap.

“Good! Good! You’ve reacted quite quickly. It seems your esteemed self is truly not simple. However, my dear friend has spectated for such a long time. Shouldn’t you come out and have a chat with Senior Martial Brother Lu?” Senior Martial Brother Lu retracted the azure rope to his hand. He coldly and calmly said these words towards where Han Li was hiding. It seemed that he had discovered a trace of him earlier.

Chapter 167: Fierce Battle (1)

Since he was already exposed, there was no point in further hiding.

Han Li took a deep breath. With the dazzling protective barrier activated and a magic tool in each hand, he walked away from behind the rock.

“It’s you.”

After he clearly saw Han Li’s appearance, this “Senior Martial Brother Lu” shouted with surprise. He actually recognized Han Li.

Han Li was slightly startled by his shout, and his heart sunk a bit.

This Senior Martial Brother Lu had merely seen him once from that time on the hill in the midst of a chaotic fight. Several months had already passed and yet he actually still recognized him. Not only did this man have great memory, but he also had outstanding shrewdness and a careful mind.

Regardless of the circumstances, Han Li could not consider this good news.

In fact, he already faintly felt that the Senior Martial Brother before him could be considered a similar kind of person as himself, equivalently merciless and good at scheming.

The particular arrogance he showed off in front of others was absolutely a similar smokescreen like Han Li’s low-key profile. However, Han Li had unexpectedly aroused another person’s attention, while Senior Martial Brother Lu was able to conceal his true colors, deliberately having others look upon him with scorn.

Regardless, Han Li believed that he himself was incapable of being as shameless or as cruel and savage as him. From the beginning, he had only pursued his ordinary path of self-improvement.

During the time that Han Li’s heart was apprehensive, Martial Brother Lu’s expression grew solemn. He seemed to have also come to some sort of realization and looked at Han Li with an ominous gaze, not concealing

his killing intent in the slightest.

Han Li let out a sigh. He originally wished to spout out a few misunderstandings and see whether he could fool him. But currently, seeing his appearance and knowing his shrewdness, he didn't have the slightest chance to deceive him. He was certain only one of them could be left alive. He shouldn't waste energy to create a misunderstanding, as he could not longer strike first and gain the upper hand.

With this thought, Han Li remained silent and raised the fine steel ring in his left hand, producing a strange whistle. It then charged straight toward Senior Martial Brother Lu. Soon after, the dark green gourd in his right hand lit up, and five or six dark indistinct spheres spouted from its mouth and followed after the steel ring.

Han Li was not done, however. He made a slight gesture with his empty left hand, and several red fireballs appeared in an instant. He slightly moved his sleeve and lined up the fireballs. He then suddenly threw them toward Senior Martial Brother Lu, whispering the word, "Go."

Carrying a blazing hot Qi, the fireballs separated into four different directions like a swarm of bees and attacked Senior Martial Brother Lu from distinct angles.

In this move, Han Li had nearly utilized all of his previously acquired magic tools. He didn't use the treasure talisman in an all-out attack, since it would have been made complicated by the fireballs' movement. In addition, it would have wasted the great effort Han Li put into learning this technique from Wu Feng as an instant-kill move against an unprepared opponent.

Actually, if Han Li had been familiar with the new magic tools and could have quickly mastered them, he would have already used all of them at an earlier time without restraint. After all, the strength of his new magic tools was far greater than that of his old magic tools.

However, Senior Martial Brother Lu did not remain idle while Han Li acted. He brought out a large azure flag on a pole about a Zhang long. The banner had a long-clawed, dancing, ferocious azure flood dragon

embroidered in an azure light.

At this time, Senior Martial Brother Lu saw Han Li's successive attacks and was surprised. He couldn't help but be extremely flustered.

The reason why he brought out his most powerful magic tool, the Azure Flood Dragon Banner, was because he thought similarly to Han Li: He wanted to kill him immediately to silence him.

But he absolutely didn't expect Han Li to unleash an overbearing attack as soon as he appeared without saying even a word. Furthermore, his attack was vicious, with an indomitable intent.

With no better option, "Senior Martial Brother Lu" decided against launching an assault and passed the azure banner to his right hand. Then he moved his left hand toward the storage pouch from his waist and took out a yellow talisman.

He looked at the high-grade talisman with reluctance before clenching his teeth and threw it in front of him, rapidly muttering to himself.

In an instant later, Han Li's steel ring was letting out a faint yellow light. It was not far from Senior Martial Brother Lu and was about to pound against him.

Senior Martial Brother Lu pointed at the yellow talisman with his free hand and loudly shouted, "Wind Wall Technique, rise!"

Following that loud shout, the yellow talisman turned into a white hurricane over ten Zhang tall. It stood in front of Senior Martial Brother Lu, obstructing the path of the steel ring.

Pu. The steel ring penetrated into the hurricane but was immediately blown side to side. After rotating several times, it was suddenly flung back.

As for the spheres that arrived soon after, they were even more useless, only capable of revolving outside the hurricane. They didn't even have the ability to enter the gale.

Seeing these circumstances, Han Li's complexion slightly changed. He

hastily pointed to the fireballs and immediately turned them into two huge crescents, agilely attempting to flying off in two directions in a futile attempt to further attack Senior Martial Brother Lu.

“Hehe! Beautifully thought!”

Senior Martial Brother Lu coldly laughed. With an extremely skilled, one-handed incantation gesture, he pointed to the center of the wind wall, causing the hurricane to separate into two. They separated extremely quickly and once again obstructed the fireballs.

Pengpeng.

Several sounds of explosions rang. The fireballs were unable to evade once more and could only meet against the wind wall.

The hurricane trembled several times, swallowing up the fireballs and causing them to disappear without a trace. Han Li felt overwhelmed with shock.

At this moment, under Senior Martial Brother Lu’s control, the two hurricanes turned back into one.

“Such a minor talent dares to show off his incompetence! Although I know neither the name nor the origin of Junior Martial Disciple, tonight your death is certain!” Senior Martial Lu said with a savage smile.

Soon after, he only saw his hands meet, holding the Azure Flood Dragon Banner once more and waving it with all his might.

Han Li was somewhat nervous since his opponent was far more troublesome than he expected. Such a swift and fierce chain of attacks had actually been so effortlessly dealt with. Although the opponent waved that banner, nothing unusual had yet to happen, but from looking at the opponent’s imposing appearance, he knew that this Senior Brother Lu’s counterattack would absolutely be nothing to scoff at.

‘It seems I have no choice but to use the talisman treasure,’ Han Li coldly thought.

However, he was currently unable to make full use of the talisman

treasure with a condensation technique. As a result, every time he used the talisman treasure, he would need to fight for a certain amount of time to execute the spell that would propel the talisman treasure to vanquish the enemy. For this reason, his defense must be absolute.

With this thought, Han Li took a look at his opponent. He only saw Senior Martial Brother Lu waving his azure banner. The banner gradually grew brighter and started emitting a blinding azure light, causing the azure flood dragon to become even more sinister and frightening. It seemed the opponent was on the verge of starting his assault.

Han Li no longer hesitated and moved his hand. Hu. The ring flew back and stopped several feet away above his head and began to hover above.

“Grow.” With this soft shout, the steel ring let out a large yellow light and hurriedly expanded. It stopped growing larger when it reached the size of a small table.

“Fall.” That steel ring obediently fell with Han Li at the center of the circle. Then it began to swivel around, forming a large protective barrier.

Han Li hadn't stopped there. After he put away the gourd, he took out his newly acquired shield as an offering. It grew several times larger outside the blue light barrier and softly floated in front of him, emitting a black light.

Like that, Han Li had three layers of defense. His outermost later was the large and fine steel ring. In the middle was the Flying Dark-Iron shield. The innermost layer was the blue light barrier he had used at the very beginning.

Chapter 168: Fierce Battle (2)

After all this was done, Han Li was satisfied and took out the small gray sword talisman treasure. He then sat down cross-legged and began to cast the spell, intending to attack with the treasure talisman as soon as possible.

At that moment, the Senior Martial Brother Lu across from him finally gathered enough Spiritual Qi for the Azure Flood Dragon Flag and launched a tempest-like attack.

As soon as he stopped waving the banner, he pointed the banner toward Han Li. Wu wu. Suddenly, over ten azure wind blades appeared and raced out from the banner toward Han Li.

The speed of these wind blades was far too swift. In a blink of an eye, they had left Senior Martial Brother Lu and were next to Han Li. Wind attribute magic techniques were truly not lacking. The speed of their attacks were greater than other elemental magic techniques by over fifty percent.

Were it not for the defenses he had prepared in advance, Han Li feared that he would not have been able to react and would have already been beheaded by these multiple wind blades.

Just as Han Li was startled, the wind blades fiercely collided against the outermost fine steel ring. Azure and yellow rays of light sparkled continuously along with the sound of cutting strikes.

When the rays of light disappeared, the originally smooth steel ring's outer layer had over ten overlapping foot-long grooves. The entire magic tool was clearly already worn and damaged. Regardless, it was fortunate that this magic tool was continuously swiveling as it was attacked, causing the wind blades to all attack at different places. Otherwise, the ring would have already been broken and allowed the blades to penetrate his first line of defense.

Both Han Li and Senior Martial Brother Lu felt surprised from this outcome.

Han Li felt that although this steel ring magic tool was originally not intended for defensive use, it was a genuine, high-quality magic tool, and the quality of its material was naturally unquestionable. However, he didn't expect that a mere few trifling wind blades would have almost destroyed it.

Senior Martial Brother Lu was even more surprised. This Azure Flood Dragon Banner was a famous top-quality magic tool. Because it matched the properties of his spiritual roots, he had paid a bitter, heart-wrenching price to acquire it.

Not only could this magic tool effortlessly and instantly cast the Wind Blades Technique and other simple magic techniques, when it absorbed a certain amount of Spiritual Qi, all of the wind attribute attacks that the banner cast were amplified. This was why each of those wind blades from a moment ago, although they appeared to be the simplest kind of elementary low-grade magic techniques, had power comparable to that of a mid-grade magic technique.

In other words, the seemingly simple attack from a moment ago was actually a concentrated bombardment of over ten mid-grade magic techniques. Despite this, it wasn't even able to destroy the outermost huge metal ring. How could this Senior Martial Brother Lu not be apprehensive or even fearful toward Han Li?

Although Han Li and Senior Martial Brother Lu both felt that the other party was ruthless, their following actions were quite different.

Because Han Li had yet to control the talisman treasure and was unwilling to give up halfway, he could only bitterly brace himself for the incomparably swift and fierce attack that was certain to come.

And with Senior Martial Lu's superior intellect, when he saw Han Li arrange a defensive position and remain motionless after the previous attack, he knew that Han Li was certain to be preparing a trump card. Not some high-grade magic technique attack but a ferocious magic tool.

As a result, he did not hesitate and madly poured spiritual power into the banner in his hand. He then pointed the banner toward Han Li,

releasing a violent flurry of azure wind blades.

This time, the wind blades were relatively small but steady and persistent, taking the form of long azure torrents. The torrents rushed forth, causing azure and yellow light to appear from the fierce strikes.

This time, Han Li's steel ring was only able to persevere for a short period of time before suddenly producing a heavy boom. Yellow light greatly scattered, and the high-quality fine steel ring finally broke.

With nothing obstructing the wind blades, they rampantly charged straight forward. However, they were met by another top-quality magic tool, the Dark-Iron Shield. It obstructed their way, and bursts of black and azure light were produced from the collisions.

The Dark-Iron Shield was very different from the steel ring magic tool.

First of all, the ring's quality was a grade inferior. This shield was a top-quality magic tool of the same grade as the Azure Flood Dragon Banner. In the cultivation world, who could possess such rarely-seen objects? The steel ring was simply a high-quality magic tool. Although it could not be said to be a commonly seen item since they were widely possessed, the cultivators who had the status to possess one or two of such items were still a sparse few.

Secondly, although this iron shield didn't have the slightest potential for attack, as a magic tool specialized in defense, its defensive power exceeded that of even four of those steel rings. Not only was it durable and sturdy, but there were also several specialized defensive enchantments attached to the shield, causing its defensive power to greatly increase.

As a result, the stream of attacks that consisted of over a hundred frantic wind blades was effortlessly intercepted by Han Li's floating shield. It stood like a mountain in a storm and emitted black light. It didn't move even the slightest, giving off the appearance that it had plenty effort to spare.

When Senior Martial Brother Lu saw this, his mind grew furious, but he merely gave a cold snort. He shook out both his hands, no longer

releasing wind blades from his banner point. Then he gripped the banner pole, and his hands suddenly emitted a great white light as if a flood of spiritual power was leaking from his body, rushing forth into the banner pole.

After receiving such a huge amount of spiritual power, the Azure Flood Dragon Banner's azure light grew even more dazzling, as if there was an azure sun rising in the middle of the night; few would dare to look straight at it.

Because Senior Martial Brother Lu used too much magic power, his complexion grew extremely pale. However, he still wore a fierce and cruel expression. It seemed he was fully aware that further delay was sure to bring trouble, so he intended to deal a finishing blow at all costs.

(TL: 夜长梦多 A long night is fraught with dreams - "further delay was sure to bring trouble".)

Following a low roar from Senior Martial Lu, he forcefully tossed the Azure Flood Dragon Banner into the air. Then he performed finger incantation gestures at great speed and pointed toward the banner, shouting, "Flood Dragon Transformation!"

The Azure Flood Dragon Banner overflowed with azure light and released it in every direction. In an instant it transformed into a huge azure flood dragon over ten Zhang long. It was vivid and lifelike, baring its fangs and brandishing its claws as if it were an exact copy of the embroidery on the banner.

"Go." Without the slightest hesitation, Senior Martial Brother Lu commanded with his finger. That flood dragon immediately opened its huge mouth and fiercely pounced straight toward Han Li. Then, a loud and deafening "Dang" rang out. The head of the flood dragon was struggling against the Dark-Iron Shield.

Azure light and black light simultaneously blazed. At the moment, they seemed evenly matched. However, not longer after, the shield's black light rapidly grew weaker at a rate that could be seen with the naked eye.

It appeared that this shield would meet a similar end to the preceding

magic tool, but all of a sudden, a clear voice spoke, "Withdraw."

Following this sound, the iron shield immediately grew smaller and quickly retreated. Then the azure dragon's Qi greatly blazed and ferociously pursued it. It widely opened its mouth as if wanting to swallow both Han Li and the shield.

However, at this moment, a brilliant gray streak of light several Zhang long flew from Han Li, who was originally sitting cross-legged. It assumed the form of a huge sword. Without showing weakness, the sword struck against the flood dragon's head, causing them to mutually tangle around each other.

For a moment in the air, the azure light suppressed the gray light. A moment later, it was the gray streak that restrained the azure light. For a short while it was unknown which was stronger.

As for the iron shield, after it reverted to its original palm size and fell into Han Li's hand, it was returned to his storage pouch. At this moment, all of his magic power was being used to carry the treasure talisman's attack. He had no leftover magic power to offer the shield.

The current treasure talisman's gray streak transformation was incomparable to the time he used it to kill the yellow-clothed men. One could actually make out the sword within the light, and its power was greater by at least four times.

It should be known that in the hands of Monk Golden Light, the treasure talisman could only transform into a gray streak that was one foot long. In the hands of Han Li when he was practicing the Telekinesis Technique, the treasure talisman could turn into a light streak several feet long. But when Han Li used it to kill the yellow-clothed men, the treasure talisman's light streak had been about a Zhang long.

As of now, Han Li's magic power had already reached the eleventh layer. Not only did its length greatly increase, becoming two to three Zhang long, its shape also faintly resembled a huge sword as well. Its brilliance dazzled the eye, and the radiant streak moved as it pleased with an astonishing grandeur, causing people to look on with surprise. Were it

not in this enhanced state, this treasure talisman might not have necessarily been able to withstand the Azure Flood Dragon Banner's transformation.

From this, it could be seen that a treasure talisman's might not only depended on the might of the magic treasure sealed within but also the amount of magic power refined by its user. The deeper the user's magic power, the more thoroughly the talisman treasure's might may be displayed.

He truly did not know what shape the talisman treasure would take if he used it after he entered Foundation Establishment. As Han Li controlled the gray streak to tangle with the azure flood dragon in battle, however, he did not know why but he was unexpectedly distracted by a sudden thought.

Chapter 169: Fierce Battle (3)

Han Li's and Senior Martial Brother Lu's magic power was being steadily delivered to the 'sword talisman' and the 'Azure Flood Dragon Banner'. Both their bodies and minds were focused on their struggle. They didn't dare to be careless or negligent in the slightest.

Neither of them used any unnecessary concentration or magic power to prevent the other from being victorious. They both clearly understood that the slightest carelessness in one side would cause the immediate destruction of a treasure along with a person's death; there was no retreat or leeway.

Thus, the struggle between the azure flood dragon and the huge sword, unexpectedly developed into a battle of attrition to see whose magic power would be exhausted first.

When the two people realized how much magic power they had in reserve and understood the crucial point of the battle, they both took the same action to increase their own spiritual power. They took out spirit stones and held them in their hand to absorb their magic power.

However, Senior Martial Brother Lu had a low-grade wind attribute spirit stone, while Han Li had a mid-grade earth attribute spirit stone. This discovery caused Senior Martial Brother Lu's complexion to become unsightly, and he became exceptionally frightened and alarmed.

A Qi Condensation disciple unexpectedly possessed a mid-grade spirit stone that usually only sect cultivators at Foundation Establishment or higher could obtain. This was completely unexpected since everyone knew that mid-grade spirit stones replenished spiritual power far faster than low-grade spirit stones. In terms of replenishing spiritual power, he was at a great disadvantage.

Regardless, Senior Martial Brother thought better of it. His magic power was already much deeper than his opponent's. Even if his opponent replenished his magic power faster than he did, he wouldn't be able to persist for long. After all, the little bit of magic power that was

replenished would be consumed at the same rate as it was used. It was truly insignificant.

With this thought, Senior Martial Brother Lu calmed down and concentrated his attention.

But when Senior Martial Brother Lu saw Han Li's next action, Senior Martial Brother Lu's complexion changed once more to an appearance of disbelief and amazement.

Han Li voluntarily removed his blue protective barrier in front of Senior Martial Brother Lu and openly revealed his true body.

Although Senior Martial Brother Lu was outstandingly intelligent, his opponent's actions caused his mind to be in a state of confusion. He did not know what Han Li was thinking.

Could it be that Han Li was no longer worried that his wind blades could take his life?

Senior Martial Brother Lu's thoughts turned several times in his mind but did not hesitate for long. He decisively extended his left hand toward the sky and formed a faint azure wind blade.

However, Han Li did not wait for Senior Martial Brother Lu to finish condensing his wind blade and flung his arm toward the opponent. The huge sword rigidly tangled with the Azure Flood Dragon suddenly resonated with great radiance. Han Li actually took advantage off his preoccupation with the wind blade to suddenly shake off the azure flood dragon and shot straight toward Senior Martial Brother Lu.

In this short moment, Senior Martial Brother Lu was startled and frightened by no small amount. If he persisted in forming the wind blade and shooting it out, he may be able to take Han Li's life. Equivalently, the giant sword would execute him, and he was also certain to lose his life, ending both sides in mutual destruction.

Although the wind wall had yet to dissipate, this huge sword was able to contend with the Azure Flood Dragon Banner's transformation. That hurricane would certainly be easily destroyed by the huge sword, unable

to obstruct it for even a fraction of a second.

This Senior Martial Brother Lu was unable to accept this outcome. He still had his originally vast future prospects and a beautiful future. He was simply unwilling to meet his end in the wilderness against this unknown person.

With this in mind, he thought no further. He gave up on the wind blade and wildly channeled all of his magic power toward the azure flood dragon and summoned it toward him.

That Azure Flood Dragon Banner was truly an amazing wind attribute magic tool. Underneath the entirety of Senior Martial Brother Lu strength, it met Han Li's huge sword halfway and once again entered a struggle.

Seeing this, Senior Martial Brother Lu let out a sigh of relief, his body covered in cold sweat.

Thus, in the following period of time, Senior Martial Brother Lu attempted to cast magic techniques several more times, wanting to attack Han Li.

Han Li, however, used the same technique every time, forcing him to withdraw. Although Han Li hadn't the least bit of protection, he was unable to act against him. Senior Martial Brother Lu was incomparably sullen and was forced to rely on his deeper magic power, thereby continuing to deplete it.

At this moment, Han Li took out various small herbs and such from his storage pouch and stuffed them into his mouth. As he chewed the large mouthfuls, Senior Martial Brother Lu was dumbstruck; he didn't know what other sinister plot his opponent was planning.

He could not guess what his opponent was planning and was baffled, causing Senior Martial Brother Lu to feel bleak. He had a bad premonition. However, he cherished his life far too much. Although he was far more shrewd than normal people, he had been at his wits end for a while.

As more time passed by, Senior Martial Brother Lu's heart gradually

grew heavier.

At last, the azure dragon's light began to dim but the huge gray streak was as dazzling as before. Senior Martial Brother Lu could not help but be frightened. He shouted out hoarsely, "Impossible! My magic power far exceeds yours. Even if you've been replenished by a mid-grade spirit stone, it is impossible for you to currently have energy remaining. You should have exhausted your magic power before I did!"

Soon, the azure flood dragon was on the verge of collapse. Senior Martial Brother Lu yelled out, his shout like the last bark of a wild dog that fell into a well, full of objection.

When Han Li saw his plan completely realized, he could not help but smile. After he heard the opponent's words, his mouth slightly slanted, causing his smile to become a sneer.

He didn't have the leisure to explain all of this to a dead man as killing him was the most urgent affair. He was also almost entirely out of magic power, so how could he afford to waste that effort on the enemy?

With this thought, Han Li paid no attention to the opponent's question. He pointed his hand to the huge sword, causing its radiance to become even more magnificent. It gradually whittled away at the azure flood dragon until it was only a Zhang long. Its azure light was so dim that it could nearly no longer be seen.

When Senior Martial Brother saw this, he became completely desperate. Thus, the desire to stake it all rose in his heart, and his eyes gradually shone with madness.

Without speaking, he gradually retrieved the little magic power remaining in the Azure Flood Dragon Banner, causing it to return to its original form in an instant and fall from the sky. Then, without regard for the huge sword rushing forth to execute him, he used his remaining magic power to condense a huge wind blade and ruthlessly threw it toward Han Li without the slightest hesitation.

When Han Li saw this, his heart trembled. While the opponent rushed to throw the wind blade, he directed the huge sword to behead the

opponent. Then without staying to look at the aftermath, Han Li fled, already rushing out several Zhang.

After previously receiving the wind blades, Han Li knew of their frightening speed. If he didn't immediately use "Shifting Smoke Steps" to avoid it, he wouldn't be able to defend himself. He would have been caught unprepared and be cut into two, dying with grievances and unable to rest in peace.

(TL:死不瞑目 dying with eyes open-dying with grievances)

The wind blade was truly extraordinarily fast. It already reached the place that Han Li had just fled from. However, it unexpectedly followed the direction Han Li was fleeing in, once again fiercely shooting out.

Han Li did not think any further and used "Shifting Smoke Steps" to its greatest extent. In a small area, he continuously shifted left and right, transforming into several afterimages, causing the wind blade that was closely chasing him to be unable to catch up.

Han Li clearly understood that if he fled in a straight line, he would certainly be cut down by the wind blade. By using fine and delicate movements, he would be able to defend himself without worry. This was the reason why he dared to abandon his defensive magic technique.

Puchī. The wind blade suddenly lost control and disappeared into the earth, leaving a deep groove.

Han Li let out a long breath. At this moment, he calmed his panicked heart. Using a movement technique from the mortal world to evade a cultivator's attack was truly a frightening affair.

Han Li sat on the ground and then looked across from him.

He saw that the wind wall had already disappeared and that Senior Martial Lu, who had been hiding behind it, was cut into two pieces. The two-pieced corpse laid there motionlessly. Next to it was a huge sword with a dimming radiance.

Chapter 170: Spoils of the Battle

Han Li raised his hand and beckoned to the sky. That huge sword immediately turned its point and flew back. When it was in front of Han Li, it returned to its original talisman form and fell toward his hand like a light feather.

Just as Han Li reached out his hand to the treasure talisman, Zila, it turned to flames. A short moment later, it turned into a pile of ash and disappeared with the mountain wind.

Seeing this, Han Li stood there, expressionless. A moment later, he bitterly smiled.

This “treasure talisman” could be considered utter scrap. Even at the start of the fight, it no longer had much power remaining. Too much time had passed in the close struggle, eventually consuming all of its power. This caused Han Li, who deeply knew of its value, to feel great heartache, but he could do nothing about it.

After all, being able to kill a formidable enemy such as Senior Martial Brother Lu did not come without cost! Regardless, the opponent’s Azure Flood Dragon Banner was actually quite an impressive loot. It was sufficient enough to make up for the loss of this treasure talisman. Not to mention the two Foundation Establishment Pills he had yet to plunder!

With this thought, Han Li could not help but burst with joy, feeling that this fierce battle had actually been worth something.

If he could take these pills and succeed in reaching Foundation Establishment, he wouldn’t need to participate in braving the strange and dangerous “Trial of Blood and Fire”. After all, the number of cultivations as strong as “Senior Martial Brother Lu” was sure to be substantial! He feared there would be even quite a few cultivators who were even more troublesome.

A moment later, Han Li was absorbing a spirit stone in his hand. After he recovered his magic power to some degree, he stood up, wanting to pick up the Azure Flood Dragon Banner not far away from him.

Just as Han Li straightened his back, an acute stab of pain came from his Dantian, making it feel as if countless steel needles were suddenly stabbing into it. Han Li doubled over from the pain. His complexion was incomparably pale as he grimaced in pain.

Han Li was motionless. After the time it took to brew a cup of tea, he took a deep breath and felt the pain slightly weaken.

Han Li's expression was somewhat gloomy; the corner of his mouth twitched several times.

As for why this was happening, he was well aware. The reason was the great amount of aged medicine herbs he had swallowed a moment ago. Although he was able to promptly absorb some of the herbs' spiritual power, much of it gathered at his Dantian as foreign rejection. Mixed among this were many unclear medical impurities. If he didn't purify them in time, they were certain to cause no end of trouble.

Although Han Li fully knew that swallowing the spiritual herbs was undesirable and certain to harm himself, he had done so to preserve his life. He had no better option but to take the risk and try. Sure enough, this method of forcefully absorbing Spiritual Qi had been of great help during the prolonged battle.

However, just devouring medicine herbs was not enough to allow Han Li to persevere to the end. Apart from replenishing his spiritual power with the mid-grade spiritual stone to defeat the opponent, there was another crucial point contributing to his victory: the cancellation of his defensive magic technique, the "Water Barrier Technique".

In the previous two years that he spent studying and practicing basic magic techniques, Han Li unexpectedly learned from Wu Feng that a majority of the low-level disciples had a misunderstanding over the use of talismans: they believed that apart from the spiritual power they used to activate the talisman, talismans did not further consume any of the user's power.

In reality, the moment the talisman was activated, it continued to use a sliver of magic power from its connection to its user, allowing the user to

conveniently control the magic technique. If the magic technique did not disappear, the user would continue to be drained of magic power to preserve the spiritual connection.

Because Qi Condensation disciples were unable to see or interact with these sorts of spiritual threads, in addition to the minuscule amount of magic power used in the short term, a majority of the disciples overlooked this, resulting in false understandings.

Although there were several disciples who knew the truth, they felt that this matter was insignificant. As a result, this information was not actively spread among low-level disciples. Wu Feng was one of those few who knew. When he told Han Li this during a casual chat, Han Li deliberately kept it in mind. After several personal tests later, he verified it to be true.

As a result, in the middle of that fierce battle of attrition, Han Li remembered this and decisively revoked his defensive magic technique, saving quite a bit of magic power. Although it seemed to be a negligent amount at first, the magic power it would consume was not insignificant after a long period of time.

Like that, Han Li relied on this bit of preserved magic power to persevere a bit longer against the opponent. Had he not relied on those two advantages, he might've not been the one who lasted longer .

Thus, Han Li undoubtedly felt that this victory had been exceedingly dangerous to have exhausted all of his means simply to save his life. The opponent's strength was truly greater than his own!

However, regardless of how the story was told, the one left alive was him.

After Han Li felt this pain slightly lessen, he forced himself to stand and started to slowly move, eventually reaching where the Azure Flood Dragon Banner had fallen down. He forced himself to pick up the magic tool and delightfully examined it before finally putting it away in his storage pouch.

Then, he walked over to "Senior Martial Brother Lu's" corpse. After he

looked at the extremely bloody scene with slight disgust, he waddled around to look for loot.

His storage pouch was easily found on the upper half of the corpse.

Han Li impolitely took out the items from the storage pouch and emptied them all out. Soon enough, he saw the case and bottle containing the Foundation Establishment Pills.

Feeling elated, he could not help but look at these items. He hastily lowered his body to pick up the case and bottle. Then he opened them, finding a lustrous blue medicine pill in each container. Although the scent was somewhat pungent, the pills contained formidable spiritual power.

Han Li wore a strong smile on his face. He was immediately certain that the Foundation Establishment Pills were genuine. Even so, he currently had no mind to look through the other goods. After all, this place was where a battle had just occurred. He did not stay there for long and hurried to slip away.

Han Li swiftly put away the items and carefully concealed Senior Martial Brother Lu's storage pouch. He felt a bit of relief and could not help but straighten out and stretch his body.

At this moment, he heard the sound of wind behind him, as if something was charging over. Han Li was startled and immediately thought to escape, but he suddenly felt a violent burst of pain from his Dantian, causing his body to suddenly become sluggish. Then a fragrant, smooth woman's body energetically embraced him from behind.

Han Li was stunned and struggled to get free. However because of the stabbing pain from his Dantian and the fact that his limbs were lacking strength from having just fought, he could not free himself.

Under these circumstances, although Han Li already faintly guessed the identity of the person behind him, he could not help but glance behind him. But just as he turned his head halfway, a beautiful and gentle face was already intimately pressed up against him and was incessantly using her sweet lips to madly kiss Han Li. As expected, it was "Junior Martial

Sister Chen” who originally could not move a single step.

It turned out that this Junior Martial Sister Chen previously couldn't move because of the Wind Binding Technique. However, Han Li and Senior Martial Brother Lu's battle didn't reach her location, so she was able to entirely avoid the battle while lying down. After the fight, she actually hadn't the slightest injury.

Before the battle started, the effects of the Joyful Meeting Pill had already flared out, causing “Junior Martial Sister Chen” to be delirious with a burning passion. Her eyes were filled with delusion, completely wanting to join together with another person. However, she was bound by a magic technique and was unable to budge in the slightest, still appearing quite innocent. But deep in her heart, she was tormented by greater and greater lustful desires.

A moment ago, the Wind Binding Technique's effects expired and “Junior Martial Sister Chen”, who had just obtained her freedom, was brimming with the excitement of lust. Thus she instantly charged toward the sole male nearby, Han Li, and tensely embraced him. From above, this appeared to be an extremely romantic scene.

However, Han Li was a genuine virgin. After the frenzy of kisses from Junior Martial Sister Chen, Han Li felt his mind shake as a peculiar feeling surged forth. Since Han Li had never flaunted himself as a gentleman of honor, Han Li did not feel it beneath him to experience having this woman in his lap. As a result, the passionate Han Li with no trace of politeness reached out from behind him and embraced Junior Martial Sister Chen.

Feeling Han Li's response, “Junior Martial Sister Chen” felt even more unbearable. Although she never experienced the affair between males and females, her natural carnal instincts still caused her to begin to tear away at Han Li's clothes.

Junior Martial Sister Chen's actions caused the infatuated Han Li to sober up. He didn't dare to tangle with fire once more and hastily felt for a Soul-Lock Talisman with his right hand. Then, with some difficulty, he

aroused the few strands of magic power he had just recovered and used the Soul-Lock Technique to restrain Junior Martial Sister Chen.

Afterwards, he softly struggled to free himself of Junior Martial Sister Chen's alluring bosom and gently placed the woman on the ground.

Chapter 171: Return

Han Li half-squatted next to Junior Martial Sister Chen in passing and lowered his head to look carefully at the soft and captivating appearance of this lustful woman.

That curvaceous, plump body had naughtily exposed the abdomen, even slightly exposing a few 'mysterious' areas, causing Han Li to become dry at the mouth and grow somewhat dizzy.

He clearly understood that so long as he wished, the extraordinary beauty before him would immediately allow him to experience ecstasy that would seep into his very bones and allow him to become a true man. But after he blankly looked for long while, Han Li reluctantly shifted his eyes away, returning his gaze towards the woman's face.

He wrinkled his brow and suddenly extended his forefinger toward her almond lips, softly wiping them. After he felt that moist smoothness, he quickly retracted his hand and softly sniffed it.

"It truly is the Joyful Meeting Pill. It seems he didn't lie!" Han Li said to himself. A short moment after, it seemed he completely regained calmness.

"Great beauty, it seems your luck is quite good. Had you consumed some other aphrodisiac, I fear I would have truly ended your life early! However, since it is the Joyful Meeting Pill, I don't necessarily have to. It can be assumed that you have already sunk into a hallucination and fundamentally cannot remember my appearance!" Han Li softly said as he lifted the woman's chin with his hand and looked into her beautiful, bewitching eyes.

"In truth, the safest method would be to have you to disappear from this world. After all, even if you are hallucinating, you still might have a somewhat indistinct impression. Although this probability is very low, you should rejoice! Even though I am not a good person, I am not so vicious and fond of killing. I am also soft-hearted towards women. If you were a man, I would have cut you down without hesitation." Han Li

continued to talk to himself, helplessly and bitterly smiling.

Once this was said, Han Li became silent for a moment. After rigidly staring at the woman's dainty appearance for a good while, he lowered his head and suddenly kissed the woman's beautifully soft and alluring almond lips. Feeling him somewhat clumsily sucking on her lips, the woman passionately responded. After a long moment of ecstasy, Han Li reluctantly parted with the woman's alluring lips.

"The affair between males and females is truly wonderful! Although I cannot truly experience ecstasy, this intimate mouthful could be considered a reward for the kindness of saving your life!" Han Li muttered, appearing absolutely reluctant to suffer a loss.

As for this woman's Foundation Establishment Pill, because he had seized it from the hands of Senior Martial Brother Lu, Han Li would not return it.

"Sigh! Your current appearance can truly tempt men. Had I not heard from Old Man Ma that men and women who lose their virginity have a reduced chance at reaching Foundation Establishment, how could I possibly reject such a fine occasion and be forced to throw away my heart's desires!" Han Li's complexion began to return to tranquility. However, he lightly shook his head, exposing a deeply regretful appearance.

After all, between the pleasures of the night and the undertaking of cultivation, which was more important? Han Li immediately reigned in his lust and cleared his mind.

As for why that Senior Martial Brother Lu didn't mind drugging and raping this woman, Han Li didn't need to think deeply to arrive at a conclusion. Seeing such an outstanding pretty boy, he had probably lost his virginity long ago, so he had no qualms about doing so. As a result, lacking the confidence to attempt reaching Foundation Establishment and delaying in taking the Foundation Establishment Pill, he inconvenienced Han Li.

Since Han Li's decision was already set, he did not intend to waste any

time.

First, he used fireballs to smash a large hole not far away and threw Senior Martial Brother Lu's corpse inside. Then he burned the corpse to ashes and filled the hole until it was flat with dirt, thoroughly exterminating traces of the corpse.

At the location of the battle, he felt that there were a few extremely district landmarks and used the long saber in his storage pouch to thoroughly slash and ruin the area, removing the slightest visible trail. Then, after he draped his own clothes on Junior Martial Sister Chen, he carried her, hurriedly flying away from that place.

After he flew west for more than a hundred Li, he found a rather large concealed cliff and descended.

After he placed the woman down beneath the large rock, Han Li thought to immediately fly away, but he turned his head to glance at this woman's blushing appearance and couldn't help but sigh. Then he turned around and moved closer to Junior Martial Sister Chen.

He fished out a white porcelain bottle from his bosom and poured some white medicine powder into his palm. Then he used a finger from his other hand to scoop some of it into the woman's almond lips. He helplessly said to himself, "Although this Joyful Meeting Pill's lustful poison cannot take a person's life, it will not be dissolved for a long period of time, greatly injuring a person's strength. I suppose doing this good deed won't take much effort. This Pure Spirit Powder will be enough to dissolve the poison!"

As Han Li said this, he saw the woman unconsciously lick the medicine. With the lovely appearance of her breathing on his finger, Han Li saw her lose her vigor.

Han Li didn't dare to stay here much longer. He hastily put away the medicine bottle and hurriedly sailed his magic tool far away from there. He knew that it wouldn't be long before the woman would become clear-headed. If he did not depart, he could encounter great trouble.

Han Li flew in the middle of the night on the shortest route toward

Yellow Maple Valley before resting for a short moment. After the sky brightened, he entered the valley with an air of confidence and returned to the Hundred Medicine Garden.

After he entered the garden, he immediately shut himself away. For three days and three nights, he cleared away the majority of the impurities from his Dantian. After there weren't enough remaining impurities to hinder him, he slowly recovered his lost true essence.

Despite this, the aftermath of the great battle still left Han Li's strength greatly depleted. He reckoned that after a couple of months of recuperation, he would return to his peak state. This caused Han Li to feel that this entire event had been very much worth it.

At this time, Han Li was sitting at his desk, admiring the greatest spoils of the battle, the two blue Foundation Establishment Pills the size of a broad bean. After he carefully scrutinized them for two hours, he returned the Foundation Establishment Pills to a copper bottle, an auxiliary magic tool, so that their Spiritual Qi would not dissipate.

As for the azure bottle and the wooden box, he naturally destroyed them to prevent anyone from discovering what he wished to remain concealed.

With this said, it was already several days after that battle. His losses had truly been not small. Not only was his flying sword treasure talisman destroyed, that high-quality magic tool, the fine steel ring was also sacrificed. With regards to this, Han Li felt somewhat regretful.

However, his spoils were also great. Apart from the Azure Flood Dragon Banner, Han Li found two other notable magic tools from Senior Martial Brother Lu's storage pouch, the azure rope he used to launch a sneak attack on him as well as a silver white hook. They seemed to both be high-quality magic tools. This was sufficient enough to make up for his loss of magic tools.

Not to mention the several tens of low-to mid-grade talismans and over twenty low-grade spirit stones.

It was unfortunate that there were no elementary high-grade talismans. There was only the Wind Wall Technique talisman that Han Li had

turned to scrap during the battle.

Han Li took advantage of this opportunity to arrange all of his loot once through. Apart from the items he would personally use and the very precious items, he destroyed the rest to avoid future troubles.

After that, he started to impatiently think about the matter of the Foundation Establishment Pills.

Han Li was completely ignorant of how to consume the Foundation Establishment Pill.

Was it as simple as swallowing the Foundation Establishment by itself, or was he required to prepare other medicines in advance and perform other actions? Should he even draw support from some external power? Common conventions say that such a rare medicine pill should truly have some specific qualities.

Because Han Li hadn't acquired the Foundation Establishment Pill beforehand, there was nothing he previously had to pay attention to. He planned to wait until after the Trial by Blood and Fire to ask around. After all, failure in the Trial by Fire would render everything else worthless. He didn't expect to possess the Foundation Establishment Pill now and, moreover, have two of them at that.

This was a pressing matter.

Half a day later, Han Li arrived at the Cultivation Guidance Pavilion.

He returned to his residence, blankly resting his upper body on the table. After being lost in thought for quite a few hours, he suddenly smashed his fist against the corner of the table, causing his fist to turn completely red. He ignored the pain as if it wasn't there.

Not long before, on the pretext of wanting to learn new magic techniques, he made a few indirect inquiries toward Wu Feng for the majority of the day. Eventually, he uncovered the method of taking the Foundation Establishment Pill. However, this did not result in good news for him in the slightest.

It turned out that to take the Foundation Establishment Pill and pass

the barrier to Foundation Establishment, it did not require consuming any medicine beforehand or external aid. Unexpectedly, it merely required direct consumption.

It was reasonable to say that this news couldn't be better for Han Li. However, Wu Feng's next words struck Han Li in the head. There would be a new problem that arose after taking the medicine, causing Han Li to feel greatly perplexed. Once again, Han Li found himself facing a dilemma.

Credits

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